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Palestine: The Third Arab-Israeli War, 1967

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PALESTINE: THE THIRD ARAB-ISRAELI WAR
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by
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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
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O V E R V I E W

The century of enlightenment was drawing to a close, Europe was surviving the upheavals of the French Revolution. Napoleon Bonaparte, the young hero of the Italian Campaign, having imposed the Treaty of Campo Formio, had begun work on the Congress of Rastadt, and was seeking new domains of action to match his creative imagination. In his mind, he could perceive the endless string of those fascinating empires of antiquity magically garlanded in an interminable succession.¹

His next expedition was to take him to the land of the Pharaohs and the Canaanites, later to become part of the Ottoman Empire, that 'sick man' of Europe whose agony alone would last over a century.

At this period, the Osmanlis' domination still extended widely, over most varied and renowned regions: the Nile, the Tigris and the Euphrates, the proverbial fertility of whose valleys appeared as a constant challenge to the desert. Mount Ararat, Lebanon's highest peak, which seems, "falling into the sea"² and offering, at the same time, "a refuge and an overture,"³ to give Lebanon that quality whose beauty since biblical times, both poets and writers have ceaselessly chanted; the beauty of its cedars and the holy valleys.⁴

¹Boutros Dib, "Le Drame Palestinien," Chronique de Politique Etrangère, Vol. XXI, No. 1 (1968), PP. 1-17.

²Pierre Rondot, L'Islam et les Musulmans d'aujourd'hui (Paris: Editions de l'Orante, 1958), P. 15.

³Ibid.

⁴Dib, P. 1.

Upon his return, the First Consul was to retrace the crossing of the Alps; before Tyre would come Sidon and Byblos, 'Cradle of the Alphabet'; later, Beryte, 'Mother of Laws'; elsewhere, Mecca and Medina, those metropolis of the desert converted to sanctuaries of a great religion that hundreds and thousands venerate;¹ then Damascus, the beginning of one of the greatest and most rapid conquests ever known; then Baghdad, heir to Nineveh and Babylonia, seat of the Caliphate and wisdom. Then, Cairo and Istanbul, the continuation of Byzantium ... to these evocative names which are reminiscent of the entire chapters of the history of civilization, should there be added Jordan, Nazareth, Bethlehem and Jerusalem?²

The fascinating effect of this spectacular portrayal of the Orient must have been profound when Bonaparte exclaimed, "there never have been great empires indeed, but in the Orient, next to which Europe is a molehill".³

However, Napoleon Bonaparte was not an exception in the West.

When welcoming Ferdinand de Lesseps at the French Academy, Ernest Renan declared that, by cutting the Isthmus of Suez, would he change not only the face of the continent, but also the site of future battlefields.⁴

Just to say that the present is processed out of the past is

¹Dib, P. 1.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., P. 4.

insufficient, in this case "the law of history needs a special adaptation, a reinforcement in the sense that a permanent presence of the past is present in the East."¹ Hence, the complexity of the Palestine problem, as each question and each detail finds its roots deepened in the remote millenia.²

¹Dib, P. 4.

²Ibid.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
OVERVIEW.	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
 Chapter	
I. HISTORICAL PROFILE	3
Pre-1900 Developments	3
Convergence of National Aspirations	3
' ... The People Without Land'.	5
Birth of Political Zionism	13
'Arise ye Arabs and Awake'	25
II. PALESTINE: THE THRICE 'PROMISED LAND'.	31
The Dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire	31
The McMahon--Hussein Correspondence	32
The Sykes-Picot Agreement	36
The Balfour Declaration	37
The Declaration to the Seven	43
III. HIGH HOPES AND DISILLUSIONMENT	45
The Versailles Treaty	45
The Weizmann-Fayçal Accord.	47
The King-Crane Commission	47
The San Remo Conference.	49
IV. PALESTINE UNDER 'PAX BRITANNICA'.	51
The Partition Plan	54
The Aftermath	56
The Formation of the United Nations Emergency Force.	56

Chapter	Page
V. ARAB COUNTRIES AND ISRAEL IN THE COLD WAR	59
The 'Palestine Conflict' Enters the International Scene	59
The Baghdad Pact.	60
The Soviet Entry in the Middle East	62
The Nationalization of the Suez Canal Company	62
VI. TOWARDS A THIRD ROUND.	64
The Infernal Cycle.	64
The UNEF Withdrawal.	70
The Blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba	77
President Nasser's May 28 Press Conference	80
VII. THE THIRD ARAB-ISRAELI WAR	82
The Six Day War.	82
U Thant's Defense of the UNEF Withdrawal.	85
VIII. A REASSESSMENT	90
The Psychological Warfare	91
CONCLUSION101
BIBLIOGRAPHY.105
APPENDIX A109

INTRODUCTION

Any attempt at a viable approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict - the most complex and heart-rending drama of our epoch - must take into account passionate and biased views, with very great distortion of facts.

This assessment of the dynamics in contemporary Palestinian experience, within the context of the Arab-Israeli association, seeks to trace the salient features of present realities. It returns to the near past, where ambitions of supremacy and interplay of imperialistic interests may be said to have relentlessly worsened Arab-Israeli relations.

It likewise traces the rise of Jewish nationalism in the Diaspora, as well as that of the Arab nationalism in certain provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

While stressing the effect of these forces in Palestine, the focus is on British Palestine policy. That policy is published in the Balfour Declaration: the idea of a state within a state, the so-called "Jewish National Home" in Arab Palestine.

With regard to the general treatment, the subject is presented in a strict chronological arrangement but, in order to explain activities connected with one another, a retrospective glance has from time to time been taken at an episode or a personality.

The events of 1948 were responsible for Arab bitterness against Occidental political underhandedness; those of 1956, created in Egypt, as well as in other Arab countries, a precedence of mistrust of the Occidental powers. It also marked the beginning of the Soviet flirtation

with the Arab World. Furthermore, Egypt's intra-Arab politics on the one hand, and Israel's threat to overthrow the Syrian regime on the other, led in different ways, to the culmination of the Third Arab-Israeli War.

The Third Arab-Israeli War of 1967, therefore, as the climax of Palestinian political turbulence, illustrates this all-time political paradox in the Palestinian drama.

Retrospectively, the germs of the 1967 War can be found in the Suez-phobia of the 1956 triangle attack by Anglo-Franco-Israel; and the kernel of the 1956 crisis in the proclamation of the State of Israel, in 1948.

Furthermore, this study analyses the developments following the creation of the State of Israel in Arab Palestine. The purpose is not so much to shed light on past events but, more importantly, to show that from the bitter experiences of the past, we may be able to predict the direction in which the Jewish State will have to move, if it is to live in a durable peace.

The United Nations warned Israel that their victory in the 1967 War, "could turn out to be no more than one successful battle in a long and losing war."¹ Without the development of policies such as these that will be indicated here, this warning would surely be vindicated.

¹"Editorial," The Economist, Vol. CCXXIV, No. 64662 (July, 1967).

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL PROFILE

Pre-1900 Developments

Convergence of National Aspirations.---There is a strange symmetry of events that runs through the renaissance of Judeo-Arab national movements, until their fateful encounter in the Holy Land; whose political problems, by virtue of their complexity, tended to be at once intensely interesting and immensely critical; thus, Palestine became the battlefield of European politics.

A renaissance of both peoples occurred in the last part of the 19th century: in both cases such an awakening first appeared in a rebirth of literature; both groups found the expression of their aims in the same political events and uniquely, in the same geographical region.

It is remarkable, however, that Jewish nationalism manifested itself in the dispersion, having neither the unifying force of a race¹ or territory, nor a common language; while "immured in a hostile environment,"² it reawakened to national consciousness and gave birth to a modern political movement, "like green shoots breaking from a petrified

¹It is generally believed that Judaism is a religion, not a race. The Jews are by origin Semites but the modern Israelis are of European origin by long residence in Europe, who migrated to Israel. ("cited by") Jean-Pierre Alem, Juifs et Arabes, 3000 ans d'histoire (Paris: Flammarion, 1968), P. 15.

²Arthur Koestler, Promise and Fulfilment: Palestine 1917-1949 (London: Macmillan & Company Ltd., 1949), P. 5.

forest."¹ By contrast, the Arab national sentiment was expressed by a homogeneous people who had never left their native land. The role of religion in the elaboration of their respective aims was also different: the Mosaic religion tended to confine the Jewish people of the Diaspora, to borrow Professor Toynbee's expression, within a 'fossilized society'. However, Islam had not only unified the Arabs; it had also brought together the non-Arab element of the East. Arabism, and its Golden Age, was founded on a common religion, so that four centuries of Turkish occupation left no adverse effect on Arab patriotism; since Arabs "knew only Moslem patriotism."²

It is also interesting that, like the phoenix with no secret, both Arabs and Jews emerged from the ashes of their respective glorious pasts, and, in a curious way met in the Prophets' land.

The most painful aspect of this strange encounter is the unfortunate fact that a true resurrection of the two opposing elements takes place simultaneously.³

This is precisely the paradox in the history of the Middle East, when the question of Jews and Arabs enters into its present phase and leads us to the core of the contemporary conflict in Palestine.

¹Koestler, P. 5.

²Jean-Pierre Alem, Juifs et Arabes, 3000 ans d'histoire (Paris: Flammarion, 1968), P. 73

³Eric Rouleau et al., Israel et les Arabes, le 3e Combat (Paris: Edition de Seuil, 1967), P. 170.

'... The People Without Land'.¹---The nostalgia for Zion had certainly kindled the minds of the Jews ever since the "destruction of the temple and the dispersion."² The unceasing chant of 'next year in Jerusalem' was profoundly rooted in the Jewish people of the Diaspora and to some extent symbolized the mystic religious drive of the Israelites.³ Like the mingling of the temporal and the spiritual in the Orient, this blend of mysticism and national aspirations was instilled in the Jewish soul. It could also be regarded "as an extreme case of homesickness of expatriate communities, mixed with mankind's archaic yearning for a lost paradise, for a mythological Golden Age which is the root of all Utopias, from Spartacus' Sun-State to Herzl's Zionism."⁴

Napoleon Bonaparte was among the first of the gentiles who, during a short visit to Palestine, evoked the idea of reconstituting a Jewish nation in the Holy Land.⁵ Similarly, Enfantine, nicknamed 'Prophet of Zionism', while in Egypt for the inauguration of the work of the Suez Isthmus in 1836, had contemplated the possibility of the rebirth of Israel as a nation. Returning to France, he persuaded his disciple, the Jewish businessman, Eichthal, to attract the interest of Chancellor Metternich towards the realization of this project. But Enfantine's

¹Israel Zangwill's famous slogan "Give the People Without Land, the Land Without People." ("cited by") Jean-Pierre Alem, Juifs et Arabes, 3000 ans d'histoire (Paris: Flammarion, 1968), P. 2.

²Ibid., P. 25.

³Ibid., P. 60.

⁴Koestler, P. 3.

⁵Alem, P. 60.

efforts failed.¹

As far back as 1839, the British had envisaged the possibility of re-establishing a Jewish nation in Palestine. "The Protestants in general estimated such a restoration in conformity with the Holy Scriptures."² The British Government too, welcomed this idea in order to counterbalance French and Russian religious undertakings in Palestine. At this period, the British had occupied Aden, the Southern exit to the Red Sea.

Palmerston's efforts in the early 1840s to interest the Sublime Porte in the restoration of the Jews to Palestine have as part of their background an earlier phase of Anglo-French rivalry in the Levant.

After the Syrian Episode of 1840-41, Palmerston was determined that Mohammad Ali should not succeed, with French connivance, in making himself master of Syria and Egypt. Mohammad Ali's revolt had to be checked, if the Ottoman's insecure empire were to be saved and the French discouraged in their dreams of the emergence of a great Arab state under Egyptian leadership and French patronage.³ With this in mind, Palmerston made his first move in the direction of interesting Turkey in the Jewish settlement in Palestine. In a dispatch to the British Ambassador in Constantinople, dated 11 August 1840 (the day of the expulsion of Mohammad Ali from Syria and the first appearance of a British squadron in the port of Beirut), it was stated that "there exists at present among the Jews dispersed over Europe, a strong notion

¹Alem, P. 60.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., P. 61

that the time is approaching when their nation is to return to Palestine ... It is well known that the Jews of Europe possess great wealth ... The Jewish people, if returning under the sanction and protection of the Sultan, would be a check upon any future evil designs of Mohammad Ali or his successors..."¹

It is interesting to note that Palmerston's estimate of the Jewish wealth and influence is emphasised in this dispatch; the idea that the Jews were a force in the world and could be useful friends was to re-appear over and over again in British policy towards Palestine during the years 1916-1917.²

Shortly after this communication, Benjamin Disraeli, who was still at the dawn of his bright political career, wrote his first Zionist novel, entitled Tancred.³

In 1840, a notable English Jew, Sir Moses Montefiore, proposed to Lord Palmerston the establishment of a Jewish agricultural project in Palestine.⁴ Similarly, in 1860, Ernest Laharanne, Private Secretary to Napoleon III, published a brochure, La Nouvelle Question d'Orient, in which he appealed to the Jews to devote themselves to the rehabilitation of Palestine, "under the sacred shield of France, the emancipator".⁵

In 1878, the British troops landed in Cyprus. Although it was

¹Ibid, P. 4.

²Alem, P. 61.

³Ibid., P. 60.

⁴Simon Jargy, Guerre et Paix en Palestine ou l'histoire du conflit israelo-arabe, 1917-1967 (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967), P. 16.

⁵Alem, P. 60.

meant to be a temporary occupation necessitated by the offensive overtures of the Tzar's armies against the Ottoman Sultan, the strategic nature of the Suez Canal and its proximity to Cyprus made it a lasting one. With the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 - the nodal point of Cyprus-Aden axis, the circle was conveniently closed.¹

In 1884, the year of the first congress of the "Lovers of Zion," the Russian 'putsch' reached the Oasis of Merv in Central Asia, coming dangerously close to the borders of India.² The British navy came into action ...

In 1889, the road to India was once again threatened, in another corner of the world: the French were at Fachoda. Once again the British navy came into action ... At the same time, bargainings were under way for concessions of the Baghdad railway contract.³ The motive behind this project was apparently, and even ostensibly, beyond a purely commercial enterprise. In fact, more than one authorized source in Germany had admitted that the motive behind the railway project was the German preoccupation with a hypothetical conflict with Britain, in order to neutralize the latter's presence on the banks of the Suez Canal.⁴ Incidentally, Britain occupied the Suez Canal at the outbreak of the First World War, when Turkey entered the war as an ally of Germany.

The brilliant but eccentric Laurence Olephant, on the other hand, came forward with an ambitious plan for the settlement of the Jews on a

¹Dib, P. 4.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

vast tract of land east of Jordan. An English publicist, with the support of the British Prime Minister, Beaconsfield, and the Foreign Minister, Salisbury, Laurence Olephant contacted the Sublime Port on the subject of the creation of a Jewish home in the Ottoman domain of Palestine. Negotiations were progressing favourably. However, they were interrupted by the deterioration of the Anglo-Turkish relations.¹ Thus, none of the well-meaning efforts of either the gentiles or the Jews of the pre-Zionist era gave the desired result.

Similarly, the efforts of a spiritual Zionist Asher Ginsberg, who had rightly prophesied that the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine would inevitably involve compromises and would lead to bitter violence, proposed instead the creation of a symbolic spiritual center for the Jewish people, in the Promised Land. Although this theory had attracted some support from other Jewish intellectuals, such as Martin Buber and Juda Magnes, the idea of spiritual Zionism remained stillborn.²

Finally, the re-awakening of Jewish national feelings was accelerated and intensified by the appearance of the Polish, Bulgarian and Serbian national movements. A national language was announced during the last part of the 19th century and Hebrew flourished as the literary language of Eastern Europe. Thus, the movement was diverted from a cultural to a political plane, and modern Zionism was born.³ However, modern Zionism did not as yet succeed in formulating the actual doctrine

¹ Alem, P. 62.

² Lacoutoure, Israel et les Arabes, le 3e combat, P. 9.

³ Nanhun Sokolow, History of Zionism 1600-1918 (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1919), Vol. I, P. 10.

of the regrouping of the Jewish people in a given territory.¹

The first Zionist visionaries of the 19th century had a rather vague idea about Erzeth Israel. Later, however, the idea assumed a more precise form. Even Theodore Herzl, who is considered to be the father of Zionism, had not contemplated, in the beginning, the idea of a return to Palestine. Perhaps the first who visualized a return to Palestine was Moses Hess, whose Rom und Jerusalem, in which he quotes extensively from Laharanne, was to become a Zionist classic. In 1862, Moses Hess published his brochure in which he foresaw the birth of a Jewish nation in Palestine. He was treated as a visionary and frowned upon as a dangerous heretic. But, after the pogroms in Russia following the assassination of Tzar Alexander II in 1881, the tide was turned in favour of his project.²

The following year a Jewish doctor of Odessa, Leo Pinsker, published the first Zionist manifesto, the Auto-emancipation.³ This pamphlet depicts very clearly the collective psychology of fear and repugnance, and the experiences of a people dispersed by the Romans, who were now reappearing "under the sinister aspect of the dead walking with the living."⁴ Drawing a rather sad portrait of the phantom people, Pinsker asserted that the essential problem of the Jews lay in the acquisition of a land. But at the same time they would have to content themselves

¹Sokolow, P. 10.

²Ibid., P. 16.

³Leo Pinsker, L'Auto-Emancipation (Berlin: W. Issleib, 1882), P. 12. (Traduction Française et introduction de André Neher, Jérusalem 1960).

⁴Ibid., P. 8.

with the illusion of restoring the ancient Judea:

The actual aim of our efforts should not be the Holy Land but a land. We will convey there the idea of our God and the Bible: they alone made of our ancient land the Holy Land. The rest is meaningless, whether Jerusalem or Jordan.¹

Of course, Pinsker did not object to the idea of re-establishing the Jewish nation in Palestine. But, equally, he envisaged other alternatives, such as Syria and North America, where vast possibilities for colonization existed.² However, Pinsker underestimated the enormous difficulties that accompanied his proposal. He well understood that his plans called for years and years of struggle and forbearance. But he admitted that "when one has wandered for thousands of years, nothing will ever seem too long."³

Auto-emancipation contained both the definition and the justification of Zionism. In later years, Ben-Gurion expressed the idea that, "as far as the forerunners of modern Zionism are concerned, and the force with which this idea has been expressed, we must befittingly give to Leo Pinsker the first place among the theoreticians of Zionism." "This brochure, Auto-emancipation continues to be the most remarkable classic of Zionist literature."⁴ When Theodore Herzl came upon this brochure, he declared that had he read it sooner, he would not have

¹Pinsker, P. 8.

²Alem, P. 64.

³Pinsker, P. 15.

⁴David Ben-Gurion, Le Peuple et l'Etat d'Israel (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1959), P. 20.

written his pamphlet The Jewish State.¹

However, it was not Auto-emancipation which ushered in the Zionist revolution. The brochure was read throughout Europe, but it aroused more reservations than interest. This, too, "was laughed away as a whimsical aberration."² The majority of people were not yet ready to accept the ineluctable character of anti-semitism. Far from being discouraged by the critics, Pinsker was determined to transform his ideas into concrete actions. Thus, in 1884, the first Congress of the "Lovers of Zion" (Hovevé Sion) took place in the city of Pinsk under the auspices of Leo Pinsker. It was founded to reorganize Jewish emigration from Russia. This congress is generally considered as the point of departure of the movement, if not the very idea of political Zionism.³ Soon afterwards the ramifications of this society's activities spread all over Eastern Europe and resulted in the financing of important operations. With Pinsker's help, the students' association Billu was formed in Jaffa and thus the first Aliya was created. Subsequent persecutions in Russia in 1890 and 1891, particularly the expulsion of the Jews from Moscow, reinforced the first Aliya with new and more experienced contingents.⁴

The kernel of a 'Jewish nation' and the idea that it could not exist without a territory, is explicit in Pinsker's train of thought, when he asserts that, "we have to give up the foolish illusion of

¹Theodore Herzl, The Complete Diaries of Theodore Herzl (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1960), 5 Vol., P. 38.

²Alem, P. 70.

³Sokolow, P. 49.

⁴Alem, P. 67.

accomplishing the Providential mission through dispersion. As long as we don't have a home like other nations, we have to give up that noble hope of becoming men like others."¹ "Only self-emancipation of the Jewish people as a nation would have any effect on our situation. The international Jewish question must have a national solution."²

Birth of Political Zionism.—As the first immigrants' Odyssey came to an end at the foot of the rugged hills of Judea, political Zionism was officially born with the intervention of Theodore Herzl.

A magistrate, a writer and a journalist, Theodore Herzl, a native of Budapest, belonged to the Venetian bourgeoisie. His secondary education had been in a Christian school. He was the intellectual Jew who was assimilated in Central Europe. At the beginning of his career, Herzl thought that assimilation was the best solution of the Jewish Question. Therefore, he advocated a general baptism of the Jewish people:

The idea of a general baptism is half serious and half joking. I allow myself to say, that I do not want to be baptised. But will someone give it to my son, Hans? We must baptise our children when they are incapable of thinking and when they cannot approve of being either for or against. We must find ourselves among the people.³

However, in 1894, while in Paris to report on the proceedings of the Dreyfus trial for an Austrian newspaper, the unfortunate outcome of this trial convinced Herzl of the contrary.⁴ He emphatically stated two

¹Pinsker, P. 10.

²Ibid.

³Herzl, Diaries, P. 27.

⁴Jargy, P. 18.

years later, in his famous pamphlet The Jewish State, that, "the distinct nationality of the Jews cannot, would not, [and] must not disappear."¹

The Jewish State was published on February 4, 1896, in Vienna and gave Zionism its real politico-nationalistic character. This new insight shaped the whole character of the Zionist movement: "it gave to the movement the neo-Rousseauism of a 'return to the land'".²

From the outset, Theodore Herzl had attached great importance to the British Jews: "Those energetic Jews to whom I imparted my scheme in London were the backbone of the "society of Jews" which was to supervise the execution of the project. The financial problems involved were to be handled from London by the "Jewish Company" set up according to English law and under the protection of England. Furthermore, the latter would be concerned with the liquidation of the properties of those who wished to emigrate, and with their re-settlement in the new country."³

Regarding the form of government, Herzl had envisaged a constitutional monarchy or a republic of the aristocracy on the line of Plato's. His Utopia was to be not only a Jewish state but a model state as well.⁴

With regard to the territory on which the new Erzeth Israel was to be founded, Herzl, an ardent Palestinian, did not at least at this stage, make Palestine the ultimate aim of their long pursuit. He had some

¹Theodore Herzl, L'Etat Juif (Paris: Editions de Herne, 1969), P. 15.

²Koestler, P. 38.

³Alem, P. 65.

⁴Herzl, L'Etat Juif, P. 17.

difficulty in convincing Ben-Gurion, whose policy was 'Palestine or nothing', that "to succeed in creating a Jewish nation and to have it in Zion" at the same time was impossible.¹ However, Herzl was soon to shift his attention towards the Promised Land: "the unforgettable and historical country whose name alone would constitute a rallying cry of irresistible force."²

In 1897 Herzl started a weekly publication called Der Weld, which became the organ of the Zionist movement. In the course of the same year, Herzl, whose doctrine had a profound effect on the Jewish circles in Europe, held the first Zionist congress in Basle, Switzerland. The congress adopted a resolution on the basis of the creation of a "national home publicly recognized and legally secured in Palestine."³ Two hundred delegates were assembled from all over Europe. It was at this congress that the official birth of Zionism was proclaimed and Herzl elected as the first president. Also, the foundation of a world Zionist organization was laid down with the aim of: "assuring to the Jewish people a national home in Palestine guaranteed by International Law."⁴ In order to materialize his project, Herzl approached those powers which had some influence on the powerful Jewish communities such as Tzarist Russia and those which had actual control of the coveted land: the government of Constantinople.⁵

¹ Herzl, Diaries, P. 27.

² _____, L'Etat Juif, P. 18.

³ Jargy, P. 17.

⁴ Herzl, L'Etat Juif, P. 25.

⁵ Lacoutoure, P. 8.

Up to 1914, Great Britain alone among the leading powers showed some serious interest in Zionism, although, in the 1860s, when French prestige in the Levant was at its height, it seemed as though France might be disposed to do something for the Jews in Palestine. Nothing had come of this, just as nothing had come of Herzl's approach to the Kaiser in the late 1890s, when Germany, then doing her best to advertise and assert herself in Palestine, had played for a moment with the idea of a Zionist movement under German patronage and protection.¹ Among other important personalities whom Herzl approached were the Grand Duke, Frederic de Bade, the Italian Monarch, Emanuel III, and Pope Pius X. Having succeeded in interesting the Grand Duke of Baden, Herzl told him that Zionism needed a protector and that German protection would be more welcome than any other.²

During the war of 1914-1918, it was to occur to both French and Germans that the Zionists might be useful friends. However, in the last year of peace the Zionists were in disfavour both in Paris and in Berlin. The Zionist campaign against the use of German as a language of instruction, side by side with Hebrew, in the Jewish educational systems in Palestine had irritated the German Foreign Office and Zionism was denounced in the German press as the tool of enemies of Germany.³ Although Zionism's main strength was Eastern Europe, many of its most prominent figures were German Jews or Russian Jews oriented towards

¹Alem, P. 61.

²Dib, P. 7.

³Ibid.

Germany by residence in that country or by their education at German universities.¹ The seat of the directorate of the Zionist Executive, originally in Vienna, was moved in 1905 to Cologne and in 1911 to Berlin. All this might have been expected to cause the movement to gravitate into the German orbit.² As international tension increased, the Zionist organization, did, in fact, come to be suspected, both in England and France, of being a conscious instrument of German policy. But this was a misjudgement. Up to the outbreak of war there was no evidence after 1898 of any friendly relations between the Zionist leaders and the German government or its representatives in Constantinople.³

Similarly, Paris was the headquarters of the West European branches of the Chibboth Zion (Love of Zion) movement, which has an important place in the early Zionist history. The influences thus radiating from Paris might well have been expected to provide the French government with assets which it could turn to its advantage.⁴

Herzl paid a visit to the man who was considered to be the founder of anti-semitic policies in Russia, Vyacheslav Plehve, the Interior Minister, and succeeded in attracting his interest towards his project.⁵ Most important of all his efforts were, indeed, his difficult negotiations with Sultan Abdul Hamid II, which lasted two years. The Sultan

¹Dib, P. 7.

²Alem, P. 62.

³Ibid.

⁴Dib, P. 8.

⁵Ibid., P. 3.

of Turkey had been approached in the meantime, and there seemed some chance of his granting a charter of occupation in Palestine to the newly formed Zionist organization. The Sultan himself had not been disinclined to dispose of Palestine in return for cash. However, the enormous sum he had asked was beyond the Zionist means of attainment at that period. As the bargaining went on, the Sultan became aware of Moslem opposition, which he did not expect, and his enthusiasm for the sale of Palestine was in consequence diminished.¹

Although deeply disillusioned by this failure, Herzl was, nonetheless, not discouraged. With a new wave of persecutions and the Jewish exodus from Rumania, innumerable interventions on behalf of the Zionist movement had taken place all over Europe.²

For some time Herzl had toyed with the idea of obtaining territorial concessions in Mozambique or in the Belgian Congo. He particularly turned to Great Britain, in order to benefit from the ardent support of Lord Nathaniel Mayer Rothschild, head of the English branch of this family.³ With this project in mind, Herzl contacted Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies, in 1902. Not having effective rights over Palestine, the British Government was ready to consider favourably two concessions: 1) Cyprus, and 2) El-Arish in Sinai.⁴ The Cypriot solution was rejected by the Zionist Congress. However, the offer of El-Arish seemed more attractive, because they felt

¹Dib, P. 8.

²Sokolow, P. 66.

³Ibid.

⁴Alem, P. 62.

"although it is not Palestine, it is at the gate of Palestine."¹ In a letter to Lord Rothschild, who had shown some interest in his proposals, Herzl suggested that the El-Arish scheme might appeal to the British Government, since British influence in the Eastern Mediterranean would be strengthened by a "large-scale settlement of our people at a point where Egyptian and Indo-Persian interests converge."²

On the other hand, Chamberlain was genuinely concerned about the position of the Jews in Eastern Europe and anxious that Great Britain should do something to help them. But Herzl seems to have convinced him that the El-Arish in Sinai had also certain attractions from a British point of view.³ Hitherto, Chamberlain's interest in Zionism had been chiefly humanitarian; he now saw in it some positive opportunities for British policy. By supporting Zionists, Britain could enlist the sympathies of World Jewry on her behalf. She could also secure Jewish capital and settlers for the development of what was virtually British territory.⁴ Looking, moreover, to the future, a Jewish colony in Sinai might prove a useful instrument for extending British influence in Palestine proper, when the time came for the inevitable dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.⁵ Chamberlain, who must have had the imperial as well as the humanitarian aspects of the Jewish problem in mind, realized that the El-Arish scheme was a forlorn hope. During an official visit

¹Sokolow, P. 66.

²Jargy, P. 23.

³Alem, P. 67.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

to East Africa¹ in 1902, soon after his meetings with Herzl, he seriously thought that British East Africa might be suitable for a Jewish settlement under British auspice. He put this suggestion to Herzl upon his return in the Spring of 1903.²

In the sixth Zionist Congress in 1903, Herzl proposed that an enquiry commission be sent to Uganda. This created the first rift in the Zionist Congress. The Russian delegation walked out, with shouts of betrayal. At the outset the East African episode left deep scars on the Zionist movement and resulted in the resignation of Herzl from the presidency of the movement.³ The opponents of the Uganda project were so violent that one student shot at Max Nardau, the public orator of the movement in Paris, who had supported Herzl's proposition, shouting, "death to the African Nardau."⁴

The Uganda affair brought the organization to the verge of splitting and also left another legacy - a re-affirmation of British goodwill towards Zionism.⁵ With gratitude to the British Government and pride in the enhanced status of the Zionist organization were mingled the doubts and misgivings of those who saw in the proposal the beginning

¹/Chamberlain was not thinking of Uganda but of the East African protectorate, soon to become the colony of Kenya. He must, however, have erroneously mentioned Uganda to Herzl, because in Herzl's Diaries it is written Uganda and not East Africa.⁷ ("cited by") J.M.W. Jeffries, Palestine: the Reality (London: Longmans, Green & Company, 1939), P. 18.

²Alem, P. 67.

³Herzl, Diaries, P. 53.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Alem, P. 67.

of the end of Zionism as a movement dedicated to the creation of a home for the Jewish people in Palestine: the connection between the Jews and Palestine was the essence of the Zionist Creed.¹

A year later, on July 3, 1904, Herzl died prematurely at the age of 44.²

The East African episode ended in 1905. Once again the British Government had occasion to interest itself in Zionism, but this time in a less friendly spirit. When, after the Turkish Revolution, the Young Turks began to veer towards Germany, it was believed in British circles in Constantinople that the Zionists were working with pro-German elements among the Jews and crypto-Jews prominently associated with the Committee of Union and Progress.³ Reports to this effect which reached London from Constantinople in 1910-1912 did the Zionists no good in British eyes. In some influential British circles the idea gained ground that the Zionists were somehow linked with the Jews behind the Turkish Revolution and with the forces interested in swinging Turkey into the German orbit.⁴

With the death of Theodore Herzl, the second of Joseph Chamberlain's efforts to help the Zionists ended. They were made at a time when the arrival in England of considerable numbers of Jewish refugees had given rise to an agitation against alien immigrants and a demand

¹Leonard Stein, The Balfour Declaration (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1961), P. 17.

²Alem, P. 67.

³Jargy, P. 83.

⁴Stein, P. 83.

that the influx be checked. After an enquiry by a Royal Commission on Alien Immigration, certain restrictions on the entry of aliens were proposed in a Bill introduced by the Balfour Government in the Spring of 1904.¹ Though Chamberlain was satisfied of its necessity, he seems also to have felt that the Jews, who were thus to be denied asylum in England, ought, if possible, to be offered compensation and it looks as though this accounts, at least in part, for the East African offer.² The Balfour Government's Alien Bill became law in the summer of 1905.³

To say the least, Theodore Herzl, that genuine visionary, received the exalting revelation of his success ... "I have founded the Jewish state in Basle. I dare not say this in a loud voice, lest it should evoke general laughter. In five years, surely in fifty years, all of you will admit [what I have just said]."⁴

The Jewish State was proclaimed 50 years and 8 months after the First Zionist Congress in Basle.⁵

With reasonable accuracy, it can be stated that the birth of a Jewish State did not seem feasible to the contemporaries of Theodore Herzl but the creation of a national home, either in Palestine or elsewhere, was a certainty. This is why Theodore Herzl deserves to be

¹ Stein, P. 83.

² Sokolow, P. 101.

³ Stein, P. 84.

⁴ Herzl, Diaries, P. 80.

⁵ Alem, P. 68.

called the Father of Modern Zionism.¹

Two factors contributed to the success of Herzl's project: the Russian pogroms pushed more immigrants towards Palestine at a time when Herzl was defending his theory in the Diaspora. Thus, pogroms and their consequences brought simultaneously to the fore the realism of Herzl's project and its tragic necessity. Furthermore, the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire almost miraculously offered Zionism the possibility of realization.²

Another prominent figure in the Zionist 'Who's Who', is Chaim Weizmann. He was born in Grodno, Poland, in 1893; he emigrated to England in 1904 in order to complete his studies, and became a naturalized British subject.³ From his youth, Weizmann had been an active Zionist; by 1914, he had risen to a prominent position, though not to a commanding place, in the Zionist movement.

With his 'Mephistophelian face and ... sinister charm'⁴ Weizmann had an unerring instinct for timing. He was a political seismograph and able to impart to others his mystical faith in the destiny of the Jewish people and the significance of their survival. During the War, Weizmann's scientific achievements enabled him to influence the British Government and render invaluable service to his people.

Weizmann was never under the illusion that Zionism could rely for

¹ Alem, P. 68.

² Ibid., P. 71.

³ Jargy, P. 80.

⁴ J.M.N. Jeffries, Palestine: The Reality (London: Longmans, Green & Company, 1939), P. 23.

its success on mystical aberrations. Rather, it must rely on those facts that could be shown to accord with British strategic and political interests. On October 10, 1914, he conveyed his feelings to Israel

Zangwill:

My plans are based naturally on one cardinal assumption - viz. that the Allies will win. I have no doubt in my mind that Palestine will fall within the sphere of England. Palestine is a natural continuation of Egypt and the barrier separating the Suez Canal... the Black Sea and any hostility which may come from that side .. it will be the Asiatic Belgium especially if developed by the Jews. We, given more or less good conditions, could easily move a million Jews into Palestine within the next fifty or sixty years, and England would have an effective barrier and we would have a country ...¹

It would be well to note the pivotal idea of an identity between the British interests and that of the Zionist aspiration.

Furthermore, Weizmann was a remarkable chemist. He was nominated Advisor to the Admiralty and Minister of Munitions at a moment when the latter was run by Lloyd George. His discoveries in the field of explosives rendered the Allies an important assistance. It is said that Lloyd George had stated on several occasions that, "the acetone had converted me to Zionism."²

In another place Lloyd George writes:

When our difficulties [about acetone] were solved through Dr. Weizmann's genius, I said to him: "You have rendered great service to the state, and I should like to ask the Prime Minister to recommend you to his Majesty for some honour."³

To this Weizmann replied that he wanted nothing for himself but he would

¹Chaim Weizmann, Trial and Error (London: McGibbon and Kee, 1949), P. 112.

²Alem, P. 35.

³Lloyd George, North Wales Chronicle, August 27, 1927.

like something to be done for his people. He then went on to explain his aspirations for the repatriation of the Jewish people in Palestine.¹ It seems that it was the fount and origin of the famous Balfour Declaration, which had consecrated the Jewish national home in Palestine.²

'Arise ye Arabs and Awake'.³—In the 19th century, the Arab world passed through a phase of profound evolution, arising from a conflict between nostalgia for a glorious past and impatience to get rid of the Ottoman domination, which was the source of economic, social and political decadence, on the one hand, and the invasion of Western ideas, particularly those of the French Revolution, on the other. The convergence of these elements developed into an extremely explosive nationalism.⁴

Long before the conflagration of 1914, and as a reaction against the Pantouranism⁵ of the Arab Provinces preached by the Lords of Istanbul, the formation of diverse political groups was constituted; sometimes they were under cultural or social labels but often, too, with clear political ideology.⁶

¹Lloyd George, North Wales Chronicle, August 27, 1927.

²Alem, P. 36.

³Najib Azoury, Le Réveil de la nation arabe (Paris: Plon, 1905), P. 4.

⁴Dib, P. 5.

⁵During the 20th century, a nationalist movement in Turkey called for the creation of a Touranian state by regrouping of all the Turko-Mongol elements of Turkey, Iran and the USSR within one single state, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th ed., Vol. VIII.

⁶Jargy, P. 38.

The leaders of such groups were convinced liberals in the Gladstonian fashion, deeply attached to the lofty principles of liberty, equality and national sovereignty. They proclaimed the right of peoples to dispose of themselves and dreamed of a democracy based on social justice and highlighted with Arab traditions.¹

The story of the Arab national movement takes place in Syria in 1847, with the foundation in Beirut of a literary society under American patronage.² The two prominent figures of this movement were Nasif Yaziji and Butrus Bostani, both Christian Arabs of the Lebanon.³

In 1860, Bustani founded a newspaper in Beirut called the Clarion of Syria, a name sufficiently explanatory of its mission. It was the first political journal ever published in the country. In 1870, he founded Al-Jenan [The Gardens], a fortnightly political and literary review.⁴ He gave it as a motto: "Patriotism is an article of faith"; a sentiment hitherto unknown in the Arab world.⁵

In the early days of their association with the American Mission, Yaziji and Bustani had come forward with a proposal for the foundation of a learned society. The project matured in January 1857, when a society came into being in Beirut, under the name of 'The Syrian Scientific Society', which was to elaborate the first coherent Arab political

¹Dib, P. 5.

²Jeffries, P. 23.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Jeffries, P. 23.

program.¹ An interest in the progress of the country as a unit was their motive; a pride in the Arab heritage their league. Thus, with the founding of this society, the first explicit manifestation of a collective national consciousness was voiced.²

One of the members, Ibrahim Yaziji, a son of the great Nasif Yaziji, had composed a poem in the form of an ode to patriotism: Arise ye Arabs and Awake.³ The substance of this poem was an explicit incitement to Arab insurgence. His poem was rightly labelled the Marseillaise of Arabism.⁴

It would be well to note that at this point Arab national consciousness was only in its embryonic stage and independence was not the preoccupation of the 'Syrian Scientific Society'. Rather, the aim was to achieve some measures of liberalization. However, this moderation was soon to find its radical manifestations in the demands of Najib Azoury, a Palestinian, who founded in 1904 the 'League of Arab Country', in Paris. He defined his revolutionary program for the liberation of the Arab countries in a book entitled, The Awakening of the Arab Nation,⁵ published a year later in Paris. This is the first outward pronouncement of radical demands for the constitution of an Arab empire extending from the Tigris and the Euphrates across the Mediterranean Sea, and from

¹Jeffries, P. 25.

²Ibid.

³Azoury, P. 4.

⁴Alem, P. 71.

⁵Azoury, P. 7.

the Persian Gulf to the Sinai.¹ Egypt was excluded from these limits on the grounds that "the inhabitants did not belong to the Arab race."² Azoury's Arab empire comprised the Arab Peninsula, Iraq and (its twin sister) historical Syria, including Palestine.³ His project was unanimously accepted by all future Arab nationalists. It marked a turning point in the Arab national movement since the Arab nation was given a geographical definition.⁴

Ironically, a 'National Committee' was founded in Paris by Mustapha Pasha Kamel, an Egyptian, who issued a very important document in 1895.⁵ It was, in fact, a "prospective charter of the Arab independence,"⁶ which was never to be lost from sight and was to re-emerge twenty years later under the pen of Sherif Hussein, in Mecca.

Arab national consciousness which was borne on the wings of a renascent literature, in its second phase of conception was characterized by a shift from a principally cultural activity to a political movement.⁷

A group of young thinkers began an agitation for the liberation of their country from Turkish rule. They were the pupils of Yaziji and Bustani and were the first generation to have been reared on the

¹Azoury, P. 10.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., P. 15.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Jeffries, P. 25.

⁶Ibid., P. 27.

⁷Alem, P. 74.

rediscovery of their cultural inheritance. The seed of nationalism was sown and a movement was coming into existence, whose inspiration was purely Arab and whose ideal was wholly national.¹

It began with the seizure of power by the Young Turks in 1908 and lasted until the Ottoman Empire entered the war on the side of Germany. The Young Turks, by adopting the liberal program of the 'Committee of the Union and Progress' founded in 1894, had rallied the support of all non-Turkish subjects of the Empire and had instilled great enthusiasm.² For example, a number of notable leaders of the minority groups had been admitted to the new parliament and it was hoped that some profound reforms would be enacted. However, much to the disappointment of the Arab subjects, the parliament hurriedly reopened a new page of Pantouranism. Instead of putting into effect the promised decentralization, it introduced measures of Turkanization in all the Arab Provinces.³

The Young Turks' racial enthusiasm carried them even further, to the re-establishment of a Pre-Islamic Touranian civilization, at the risk of crushing the very pillars of the Moslem Empire. Consequently, the new oppressive measures towards the Arab subjects, aggravated by the deception of the hopes of 1908, embittered the Arabs and accelerated the birth of the nationalist movement.⁴

While the menace of war was imminent and Turkish participation a fact, Arab nationalism entered its third phase of existence. The demands

¹Jargy, P. 23.

²Alem, P. 74.

³Ibid., P. 70.

⁴Dib, P. 7.

of moderate reforms, of autonomy and of bi-partisanship were transformed at this stage into concrete demands for liberty. Thus the policies of the 'Societies' were moved from the plane of political vengeance to subversive activities.¹

In the post-Young Turks era, Arab national societies went underground. 'Hizb-Al-Ahd' (Party of the Oath) was perhaps the most powerful and dangerous of all such societies because its members were all high ranking officers of the Ottoman armies.² The secret or semi-secret 'Societies' which worked for Arab independence, or, as a first step, for Arab autonomy, had grown powerful. The 'Al-Arabiyah al-Fatah' (Arab Youth), was founded in Paris, by Palestinians, one of whom became well known later on as Auni Bey Abd-el Hadi, a signatory of the Versailles Treaty.³

For some time now, Sherif Hussein of Mecca, Governor of the Holy Places, had toyed with the idea of recreating the great Arab empire, with himself as the Caliph. He was following the political developments with keen interest, in case the opportunity should arise for the realization of his objectives. Exactly eight months before the outbreak of the war, this intelligent Prince had instructed his eldest son, Amir Abdullah, to contact Lord Kitchener, the British High Commissioner in Cairo, to find out whether Britain would support the Arab cause for independence for Arab support of the Allies.⁴

¹Jeffries, P. 27.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Alem, P. 75.

CHAPTER II

PALESTINE: THE THRICE 'PROMISED LAND'

The Dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire

The First World War puts in its proper perspective the personages, the framework and the mishaps of the Palestine drama. The play of the great powers, especially Great Britain, either excited or pacified the hopes and ambitions of the two movements, making the two proscribed and humiliated groups the greedy heirs of the Palestine conflict.¹

Until now, both Zionism and Arab renaissance were kept under the shadows of a decaying colonialism: the Ottoman Empire. Henceforth, the two movements were to face the protective shield of a more competent imperialism, that of the British Empire, whose ambitions had been whetted by French competition in the Middle East.²

Either for diplomatic or strategic reasons, four texts of prime importance appeared between 1915 and 1918. Forged by the pressures of circumstance, dictated by the exigencies of time, these four texts are the fundamental documents in the lexicon of Judeo-Arab conflict. These are the exchange of the McMahon-Hussein letters (1915); the Sykos-Picot Agreement (1916); the Balfour Declaration (1917); and the Declaration to the Seven (1918). Each of these documents will be treated briefly for the sake of understanding the underlying causes of the present conflict.

¹Lacoutoure, P. 10.

²Ibid.

The McMahon-Hussein Correspondence.--The exchange of correspondence took place between Sherif Hussein, King of the Hedjaz, and Sir Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner for Egypt and the Sudan. Sherif Hussein was the most outstanding personality in the Arab world and one of the stout exponents of the Arab cause. The exchange of correspondence could be summarised as a British promise of independence to the Arabs, in exchange for Arab military support against Turkey. This promise included a restriction concerning the Syrian coastal area from Damascus to Alexandretta: a precaution by the British authorities to further the aims of her ally, France, regarding the Lebanon and Syria. However, as we see later the text of the McMahon Correspondence did not exclude Palestine from the Arab boundaries proposed to the British Government.¹

Indeed, the substantial threat of Turkey's entry into the war against the allies on the one hand, and, on the other, the possible effect of this upon the Moslem subjects of Great Britain and France, if Turkey proclaimed a Jehad [Holy War] constituted Great Britain's greatest fear. Although the Moslems of India had gallantly responded to the Empire's call to arms against Germany, a war against Turkey was a totally different matter. It was, indeed, a crucial issue and Mecca the saving point. It was, however, conjectured that, if the probable Turkish proclamation of a Jehad remained confined to Turkey and did not encompass the entire Moslem world, the danger point might pass; the only peril lay in a Jehad supported by Mecca.²

¹Lacoutoure, P. 11.

²Jargy, P. 21.

On the wake of the First World War, the two sons of Sherif Hussein of Mecca, Amir Abdullah and Amir Fayçal, were in Istanbul as deputies from Jidda and Mecca respectively. Amir Abdullah (later King of Jordan) expressed his views on the impending war in his memoires: "We saw that the Turks had shifted their position and, abandoning their friends, had decided to side with the enemies of Russia."¹ It was felt then that Turkey's motive was to go to war against the allies in order to divert the attention of all non-Turkish subjects away from the pressing demands of decentralization.²

On the other hand, the members of the 'Suriyya al-Fatah' (the Young Syria) Party had met in Damascus to organize a general revolt against Turkey, in order to create a unified Arab nation encompassing "all of Syria from Tabuk (in the south), to the Vilayets of Aleppo and Beirut (in the north); and the governorate of Jerusalem."³ Thus, the preoccupations of the British Empire and the aspirations of the Arab peoples converged to pave the way for the famous McMahon-Hussein Correspondence.⁴

This negotiation launched a new phase of a rather obscure nature, during which a series of promises were made by both the British Government and Sherif Hussein: Great Britain was concerned to win the war and secure the life-line of communications to India. Owing to an

¹King Abdullah of Jordan, My Memoires Completed (Al-Takmila) (Washington: D.C.: American Council of Learned Societies, 1954), P. 32.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Jarqy, P. 22.



anomaly of history, the Arabs occupied the region with the most strategic value, whose acquisition was considered vital to the British interests. On the other hand, the Arabs desired above all the regaining of their national independence from the oppressive regime of the Ottoman. Hence the fateful Anglo-Arab negotiations, which consisted of eight letters exchanged from July 14, 1915, to December 30, 1916.¹

In his first letter, the Sherif of Mecca presented the proposition carefully formulated by the Arab nationalist societies, which reclaimed the following frontiers:

Bounded on the north by Mersina-Aderna up to the 37° of latitude, on which degree falls Birijiks, Urfa, Mardin, Midiat, Amadia Islands, up to the border of Persia; on the east by the borders of Persia up to the Gulf of Basra; on the south by the Indian Ocean, with the exception of the position of Aden to remain as it is; on the west by the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea up to Mersina.²

It was stated, furthermore, as a second condition that the British Government should approve and support the proclamation of an Arab Caliphate of Islam by Sherif Hussein. The third condition stated that "Peace was not to be concluded without the agreement of both parties."³

To this Sir Henry McMahon replied on October 1915:

Great Britain is prepared to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs in all regions within the limits demanded by the Sherif of Mecca.

The Districts of Mersina and Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying to the West of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arab and should be excluded from the limits of the dominant provisions of the agreement.⁴

¹Jargy, P. 22.

²King Abdullah, P. 30.

³Ibid.

⁴Alem, P. 78.

It would be well to note that Palestine "lay not West, but South of the reserved areas."¹

On October 31 of the same year, Lord Kitchener cabled the following message to Amir Abdullah:

Germany has now bought the Turkish Government with gold, notwithstanding that England, France and Russia guaranteed the integrity of the Ottoman Empire if Turkey remained neutral to war. If the Arab nation assist England in this war, England will guarantee that no intervention takes place in Arabia and will give the Arabs every assistance against external foreign aggression. It may be that an Arab of true race will assume the Caliphate at Mecca or Medina, and so good come by the help of God out of the evil that now is occurring.²

The significance of this message lies in the fact that Kitchener's cable placed Sherif Hussein in the position of the representative of the whole Arab world. The negotiations with him begun on the assumption that Britain meant negotiation with all the Arabs.³ Consequently, and as the result of the assurances given by Lord Kitchener, Sherif Hussein conveyed his offer of revolt, provided his conditions based on the Damascus Program (stated earlier) were met and respected by the British Government. A letter to this effect was sent in August 1916 to the British High Commissioner in Egypt. This letter may well be considered as the Arab Magna Carta, since it laid the foundation of their independence.⁴

¹The Arab Women's Information Committee, "The Facts about the Palestine Problem," Vol. II, No. 1 (January 1969), P. 2.

²Great Britain, Colonial Office, Cmd. 5974 (London: 1939), "Report of a committee set up to consider certain correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon and the Sherif of Mecca in 1915 and 1916," P. 21.

³Jargy, P. 26.

⁴Jeffries, P. 63.

On December 30, 1916, McMahon's letter reached Sherif Hussein with the pressing message:

It is most essential that you should spare no efforts to attach all the Arab people to our united cause and urge them to afford no assistance to our enemies.

It is on the success of these efforts and on the more active measures which the Arabs may take hereafter in support of our cause, when the time for action comes, that the permanence and strength of our agreement must depend.¹

The British Government's pledges were clearly and definitely phrased:

"Great Britain is prepared to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs within the territories included in the limits and boundaries proposed by the Sherif of Mecca."² Palestine was included in these boundaries. It was on the basis of these explicit pledges that the Arab Revolt was launched.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement.---However, only three months after the last letter in the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence, and after being assured of the Arab alliance, London turned to Paris, the other 'receiver' in the Levant.

The evidently secret agreement between Sir Marks Sykes and Mr. George Picot amounted to no less than a scheme for dividing the Levant into spheres of influence.³ The Foreign Office had instructed Sir Marks Sykes to discuss with Mr. George Picot, who was on a mission to Egypt, a plan for the "definition and delimitation of French and British

¹Jeffries, P. 83.

²Ibid., P. 38.

³Eric Rouleau, Israel et les Arabes, le 3e Combat, P. 11.

interests in the Turkish Near East."¹

Mr. George Picot signed the French agreement on December 21, 1916, along the lines of McMahon's reservations: "The French would administer the coastal area, while Arab government of the four towns of Homs, Hama, Damascus and Aleppo would be under French influence."²

Throwing light on yet another aspect of the Sykes-Picot agreement, Lord Asquith states in his Diaries that Lloyd George was extra prudent in his attempts "to prevent Palestine falling into the hands of the French atheists."³

The Balfour Declaration.—British political ambitions sought yet a third alliance through the publication of the famous Balfour Declaration. On November 2, 1917, in a letter addressed to Lord Walter Rothschild, Sir Arthur Balfour conveys the following message:⁴

¹Jeffries, P. 28.

²Ibid.

³Lacoutoure, P. 12.

⁴Stein, P. 15.

Foreign Office,

November 2nd 1917

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country"

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours

Signed: Arthur James Balfour¹

¹/The exact facsimile of the original letter reproduced from Leonard Steins' The Balfour Declaration _/

The text of this letter was subsequently incorporated in the San Remo Agreement and later in the 95th Article of the stillborn Treaty of Sévres. It was also recited in substantially the same terms in the Mandate for Palestine as approved by the Council of the League of Nations in July 1922.¹

In the Balfour Declaration as Arthur Koestler has it, a simple transaction of land took place, where "one nation solemnly promised to a second, the country of a third."²

There have been many conjectures as to the motives behind this extraordinary piece of political mastery. It would be more plausible to examine the testimony of one of the co-authors, Lloyd George, concerning "this all time improbable political document."³

In the evidence he gave before us, Mr. Lloyd George, who was Prime Minister at that time, stated that, while the Zionist cause had been widely supported in Britain and America before November 1917, the launching of the Balfour Declaration at that time was 'due to propagandist reasons'; and he outlined the serious position in which the Allied and Associated Powers then were. The Rumanians had been crushed. The Russian army was demoralized. The French army was unable at the moment to take the offensive on a large scale. The Italians had sustained a great defeat at Caporetto. Millions of tons of British shipping had been sunk by German submarines. No American divisions were yet available in the trenches. In this critical situation it was believed that Jewish sympathy or the reverse would make a substantial difference one way or the other to the Allied cause. In particular Jewish sympathy would confirm the support of the American Jewry, and would make it more difficult for Germany to reduce her military commitments and improve her economic position on the Eastern front.⁴

¹ Alem, P. 85.

² Koestler, P. 4.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Great Britain, Palestine Royal Commission Report (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1937), P. 17.

From the beginning of the war, American Zionists and the British Government could envisage the consequences of an eventual dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.¹ The possibility of taking a mortgage in Palestine had also been studied. Louis Brandeis, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court and an ardent Zionist, could not take an open part in favour of a Jewish establishment in Palestine, especially when his country was not at war with Turkey.² But, by virtue of his high position and his personal friendship, he could persuade President Wilson to convey to the British Government the satisfaction that such an attribution would bring to American Jewry. The weight of this communication over British decision can hardly be over-estimated.³

Another factor in the creation of this declaration, as mentioned elsewhere, was British apprehension of any French establishment in Palestine. The French, being convinced of having an historical right over the region, had expressed a desire to obtain a mandate over Palestine.⁴ The English, on the other hand, would not, at any price, allow French installation along the Suez Canal, facing the Egyptian bulwark situated along the route to India. Sir Herbert Samuel had expressed this apprehension in a Cabinet meeting in March 1915: "The establishment of a great European power so close to the Suez Canal will be a permanent and formidable menace to the lines of communications so vital to the

¹ Alem, P. 77.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., P. 78.

⁴ Jargy, P. 30.

Empire."¹

This view was confirmed by Sir Marks Sykes, who pointed out in a speech on March 18 that French activities in Syria revealed a disguised threat to vital British interests, since "the policy of the French financiers would eventually destroy the Ottoman Empire,"² and the British Government would confront a "European frontier in the Sinai peninsula."³

A third factor in the successful launching of the Balfour Declaration was the Russian Revolution of 1917. The Bolshevik Government welcomed the idea of a Jewish settlement in Palestine, and endorsed the Balfour Declaration. It had hoped, that a socialistic Jewish nation along the Soviet line might eventually be formed in the Middle East.

However important the elements, it is not any less significant that the successful endorsement of this unique document may be attributed to the romantically sentimental outlook of its co-authors: Lloyd George, Lord Balfour, and General Smuts's poetical inspiration created a political document in the Old Testamentarian mould: "to assume in one glorious moment, the role of messianic Providence."⁴

The wording of this document is even more confusing than the motives which caused such unprecedented meddling. The Royal Commission says: "It is clear to us that the words 'the establishment in Palestine of a National Home' were the outcome of a compromise between those

¹Alem, P. 77.

²Stein, P. 49.

³Ibid.

⁴Koestler, P. 7.

ministers who contemplated the ultimate establishment of a Jewish State and those who did not."¹

General Smuts, a member of the Imperial War Cabinet, understood the 'National Home' in quite a different way: "... in generations to come a great Jewish state rising there once more."² Winston Churchill's definition of this nègre blanc is even more ambiguous:

When it is asked what is meant by the development of a Jewish National Home in Palestine, it may be answered that it is not the imposition of a Jewish nationality upon the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole, but the further development of the existing Jewish community ... in order that it may become a center in which the Jewish people as a whole may take, on grounds of religion and race, an interest and pride.³

However, the Arabs were promised that nothing would be done in Palestine to "prejudice their civil and religious rights."⁴

In the final analysis, the Balfour Declaration was not received without disdain in the capitals of France and Italy. Their interest in Palestine had already been recognized by the British Government. French interest had been secured under the Sykes-Picot agreement and the Italians were given the assurances contained in the Conference of St. Jean de Maurienne.⁵ Furthermore, both the French and the Italians had been at war with Turkey; France from the start of the hostilities and Italy at a later stage, when it became a party to the secret treaties on

¹Great Britain, Palestine Royal Commission, P. 18.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., P. 24.

⁴Koestler, P. 10.

⁵Stein, P. 54.

the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.¹

On the other hand, the United States was not at war with Turkey, and the eventual collapse of the Ottoman Empire did not constitute her major concern. It was this very lack of interest in the eventual dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire that created an obstacle to an American endorsement of the Balfour Declaration. The American Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, in a letter to President Wilson on December 13, 1917, urged the President "to resist the pressure of the American Zionists for a public expression of American approval."² He reminded the President that:

We are not at war with Turkey, and therefore should avoid any appearance of taking territory from that Empire by force. Second, the Jews are by no means a unit in the desire to re-establish their race as an independent people ... Third, many Christian sects and individuals would undoubtedly resent turning the Holy Land over to the absolute control of the race credited with the death of Christ. For practical purposes, I do not think that we need go further than the first reason given, since that is ample ground for declining to announce any policy in regard to the final disposition of Palestine.³

Shortly after this communication, however, President Wilson was induced by Chief Justice Brandeis to endorse the Declaration.⁴

The Declaration to the Seven.—This document is the most important and the least known statement of policy made by Great Britain regarding the Arab Revolt. It is in fact a re-affirmation of Great Britain's previous pledges to the Arabs, based on an authoritative enunciation of the

¹Stein, P. 78.

²Jeffries, P. 80.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

principles on which those pledges rested.¹

In short, the statement defined British policy for the future of the regions claimed by Sherif Hussein as the area of legitimate Arab independence. With regard to Syria, Iraq and Palestine, the Declaration contained two important assurances:

- 1) that Great Britain would continue to work not only for the liberation of those countries from Turkish oppression but also for their independence;
- 2) that Great Britain would ensure that no system of government would be set up in the countries involved that was unacceptable to the inhabitants.²

The Declaration to the Seven, made public to the Arab representatives on June 16, 1918, by the Foreign Office, had a decisive effect in dispelling the doubts and apprehensions aroused by previous agreements.³ (See Appendix for further detail on the Declaration to the Seven).

¹Alem, P. 79.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

CHAPTER III

HIGH HOPES AND DISILLUSIONMENT

The Versailles Peace Treaty.—With Turkey's signing of the armistice on October 28, 1919, at Moudros, all of the former territories of the Ottoman Empire were liberated. Immense hopes had stirred Arabs and Jews alike. They had been victorious in their battles and they were awaiting the rewards of their sacrifices. However, for Britain, it was the most trying moment in her history: at this hour of truth, the British Government was confronted with the task of fulfilling its contradictory promises of the Holy Land to both Zionism and Arab nationalism.¹

The future destiny of the former Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire was inscribed on April 25, 1919, in Article 22 of the League of Nations. It was the darkest moment in the millenary history of the Levant, for the establishment in Palestine of a Jewish state was guaranteed by the Great Powers.²

Turkey's defeated territory was exactly the area desired by the Arabs and its boundaries coincided with the natural limits of Arab independence defined by Sherif Hussein. However, contrary to the promise made and the principles upheld by the Allies as the basis for future peace, Great Britain and France did not hesitate to impose a settlement upon the Arabs.³ Thus, upon his arrival in Paris in January 1919, as the

¹Alem, P. 100.

²Jargy, P. 38.

³Jeffries, P. 88.

spokesman of the Hedjaz delegation, Amir Fayçal was confronted with three forces working against the fulfilment of Arab aspirations:

(1) British interests in Iraq and Palestine, (2) French imperial interests in Syria, (3) Zionists' national interest in Palestine.¹

Instructed by his father, Amir Fayçal claimed, in recognition of their services, the independence of the area promised by McMahon: " ... from the line of Alexandretta-Diarbékir to the Indian Ocean."²

On the other hand, headed by Chaim Weizmann, as the English representative, and Rabbi Wise as the American spokesman of Zionism, the Zionist delegation claimed the following:

1) Recognition of the historical title of the Jewish people over Palestine.

2) Definition of the frontiers of Palestine from the River Litani in the north circumscribing the basin of Jordan and a part of Yarmouk, Herson and Houran; in the east, all along the Bagdad-Hedjaz railway; and the Gulf of Aqaba in the south.

3) Great Britain as the mandatory power over Palestine.

4) The adoption of a political, economic and administrative clause to assure the establishment of a Jewish National Home and to make the eventual creation of an autonomous state possible.³

There was yet another battle being waged between Great Britain and France over the execution of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. After the Bolshevik Revolution, Russia denounced this agreement. Lloyd George, the other signatory to the Agreement, was inclined to follow suit, for two reasons: (1) under the Agreement the Vilayet of Mosul, with its rich

¹Walter Laqueur, The Road to Jerusalem: the Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1967 (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1968), P. 20.

²Alem, P. 104.

³Ibid., P. 106.

oil fields, was assigned to France, (2) Palestine was to be under an international regime; this would have gravely hindered Great Britain from having a free hand in Palestine.¹

However, France rejected the annulment of the Agreement. As a result, Lloyd George, upon Clemenceau's insistence proposed that, in return for ceding Mosul and Palestine to Great Britain, France should have a quid pro quo compensation, including substantial oil concessions from Mosul.²

The Weizmann-Fayçal Accord.---The controversial accord to which so much importance has been attributed was, in fact, no more than a hospitable gesture on the part of Amir Fayçal toward the Jewish people. Furthermore, in 1919, there was as yet no question of an independent 'Jewish state' being created in Palestine but simply the creation of a few Jewish colonies and the acceptance of a certain number of Jews who would be allowed to live peacefully in Palestine. Amir Fayçal was persuaded by Lawrence to sign the treaty in January 1919; this amounted to a treaty of friendship between Arabs and Jews. However, Fayçal appended a significant statement in Arabic:

If the Arabs obtain their independence according to the conditions spelled out in my diary on January 4, 1919, addressed to the British Foreign Secretary, I will give effect to the substance of this accord. In the case of the slightest modifications, I will no longer be bound by a single word. The accord will not be valid and will be nullified, and I will not be responsible for any engagements.³

The King-Crane Commission.---An independent American mission carried

¹Jeffries, P. 89.

²Alem, P. 114.

³Jargy, P. 40.

out by Dr. Henry King and Charles Crane began an investigation in June 1919 in Jaffa, which took them to all parts of Syria, including Palestine. The investigation lasted for six weeks and the commissioners presented their findings on June 28, in Paris.¹

The King-Crane Report is an outstanding document with regard to the Palestine conflict. The commissioners recommended a mandatory system for Syria-Palestine and Iraq, on condition that the mandate be for a limited period and that the mandatory should aim at bringing the territories to independent status; that the unity of Syria, including Palestine, be preserved; that a constitutional monarchy for Syria, with Amir Fayçal as king, be proclaimed; and that another Arab sovereign be chosen, by plebiscite, to rule over Iraq.²

Concerning the choice of mandate, the Report indicated that the consensus of opinion in Syria was in favour of assistance by the United States or Great Britain but not by France. With regard to Zionism, the King-Crane Commission felt bound to recommend that the Zionist program should be greatly reduced, Jewish immigration definitely limited and the very idea of making Palestine into a Jewish commonwealth abandoned, since they were convinced that the Zionists looked forward to a practically complete dislodging of the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine.³ They further stated that, even if it were achieved within the form of law, it would be a gross violation of the rights of the people and the principles

¹Alem, P. 115.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

proclaimed by the Allies.¹

Despite this candid and forceful statement, the King-Crane recommendation was ear-marked for oblivion; and Great Britain and France imposed a 'settlement' of their own choice over the Arab countries.

The San Remo Conference.—On 25th April, 1919, the Supreme Council met at San Remo. Decisions regarding the former territories of the Ottoman Empire were taken, to the effect that the entire area lying between the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian frontier was to be placed under mandatory rule.² Syria was to be broken up into three parts: Palestine, the Lebanon and, of what was left, a reduced 'Syria'. They were disposed so as to suit the ambitions of each of the mandatory Powers.³ These decisions were made public on May 5th and their promulgation gave birth to a new sentiment in the Arab world: contempt for Western Powers.⁴ Moreover, it was the starting point of a new chapter in the history of the Arab Movement - insurgence against the powers of the West.⁵

As later developments proved, politically, the decisions were unwise in that they ran counter to the deepest wishes of the people concerned and to a tide of national consciousness which the war and the defeat of the Turks had swelled to a level from which there could be no

¹David Hunter Miller, My Diary at the Conference of Paris (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1922), Vol. IV, P. 108.

²Ibid., P. 118.

³Ibid., P. 116.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

receding. On the moral plane, they stand out as one of the more flagrant instances of international diplomacy, in which the breach of faith was all the more reprehensible in that it provoked armed resistance and an unpredictable toll of human life and suffering. In addition, it violated the very principles, regarding the treatment of weaker nations, that the mandates were originally created to serve.¹

¹Miller, P. 116.

CHAPTER IV

PALESTINE UNDER 'PAX BRITANNICA'

The basic principle of the British Mandate over Palestine was determined during the Conference at San Remo on April 20, 1920. This Mandate imposed on Britain the general obligations toward the Arabs dictated by the League of Nations. On the other hand, Britain's specific obligations toward the Jews were dictated by the promise of the Balfour Declaration. This is the reason for the continuation in the Levant of contradictory engagements by the West.¹

On September 29, 1923, the British Mandate came formally into effect. Article 2 of the Covenant laid down that:

The Mandatary shall be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home, as laid down in the preamble, and the development of self-governing institutions and also for safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race or religion.²

The Mandate "showed complete disregard for the 90 per cent Arab majority in Palestine by referring no less than fourteen times to the Jews or Jewish institutions, whereas the Arabs were never mentioned."³ Thus, the progress of Zionist colonization during the Mandate became for the Arab national outlook a culminating stroke in a prolonged series of breaches of faith.

¹Alem, P. 129.

²John Davies, The Evasive Peace (New York: The Mentor House, 1937), P. 46.

³Ibid.

The growing Arab opposition to the Mandate and the ensuing riots of 1920 and 1921 resulted in a British Government White Paper. In June 1922, Winston Churchill, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, issued a policy statement, or White Paper, stating that:

While it reaffirmed the Balfour Declaration, he announced that the British Government had no intention that Palestine should become 'as Jewish as England is English'; that it did not contemplate the subordination of the Arab population, language or culture, that immigration would not exceed the economic absorptive capacity of the country, and that the special position of the Zionist Executive did not entitle it to share to any degree in the government of the country.¹

Despite the above statement, in the few years which covered the tenure of office of Sir Herbert Samuel, Lord Plumer, Sir John Chancellor, Sir Arthur Wauchope and Sir Harold MacMichael, the Jews, who in 1921 did not number more than 100,000, increased to 450,000. They had acquired control of most of the fertile plain, as well as the uncultivated land from Beer Sheba to Lake Hulah.²

In 1937, the Royal Commission, after making a thorough assessment of the situation, realized that the Mandate was unworkable. It concluded that partition was the only way out of the impasse which, "if it offers neither party all it wants, offers each what it wants most, namely freedom and security ... and the inestimable boon of peace."³ In other words, partition meant "that the Arabs must acquiesce in the exclusion from their sovereignty of a piece of territory long occupied and once

¹Great Britain, Palestine Royal Commission Report, Cmd. 5479 (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1937), P. 200.

²Davies, P. 40.

³Great Britain, Palestine Royal Commission, Cmd. 5479, P. 206.

ruled by them."¹

Moreover, in 1937 the Peel Commission "recognized the British promises to Arabs and Jews as irreconcilable and the Mandate as unworkable;² it defined as the objective the establishment of a Jewish state and an Arab state, through partition. The British Government endorsed the Royal Commission's findings and appointed a further commission to work on the details of a partition plan. However, this commission, finding the country in the throes of an open Arab rebellion, reported that no practicable plan of partition could be worked out."³

In 1939, the White Paper known as the McDonald Memorandum stated that the objective of the British Government was the establishment of an independent Palestinian state within ten years. The White Paper categorically stated that "His Majesty's Government now declares unequivocally that it is not part of its policy that Palestine should become part of the Jewish state."⁴ The Jewish reaction to the White Paper can be summed up by David Ben-Gurion: "We shall fight with Great Britain in this war as if there were no White Paper. And we shall fight the White Paper as if there were no war."⁵

In the final analysis, in the words of Arthur Koestler,

What both Jews and Arabs believed to be a 'diabolic policy' was in fact the traditional muddling-along policy, guided by some vague

¹Great Britain, Palestine Royal Commission, Cmd. 5479, P. 215.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Davies, P. 30.

⁵David Ben-Gurion, Israel, années de lutte (Paris: Falmarion, 1954), P. 103.

notions of balancing the power of Arabs and Jews, and maintaining as far as possible the status quo. But the whole point of the Balfour Declaration was to upset the balance by transforming Arab Palestine into a Jewish country.¹

In April 1947 Britain at last capitulated and "asked that the question of the Mandate should be placed on the agenda of the next regular session of the United Nations General Assembly."²

The British had declared their intention of leaving Palestine by May 15, 1948. On that day the Mandate would end and juridically there would be a vacuum, since, as a preliminary to the establishment of the successor states, Britain refused to share responsibility with the United Nations during the Mandate.

Erskine Childers has thus summed up the British policy in Palestine:

Forcibly to detach a people from their historic kinsfolk (Palestinians thought of themselves as part of Arab Syria), solemnly to declare that this detachment was in order to raise them to self-determination, yet forcibly to impose upon them an alien community seeking to make their land 'as Jewish as England is English' this was and is without precedent or parallel in the twentieth century. Nowhere in colonial Asia was anything so provocative attempted. Palestine was to become a cancer unique in Western-nationalist conflicts.³

The Partition Plan.--On November 29, 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations recommended the partition of Palestine into two states: a Jewish and an Arab state, with the possibility of an economic union.⁴

¹Koester, P. 17.

²Alem, P. 170.

³Erskine Childers, The Road to Suez (London: McGibbon and Kee, 1962), P. 65.

⁴Alem, P. 170.

The details of the voting process are well known; the United Nations Partition Plan came about by virtue of the votes of the Client States who, under the pressure put by the Zionists and Zionist sympathisers of the United States, were obliged to vote for this plan.¹ It would be well to look at some reflections on the outcome of the vote. The Canadian delegation admitted: "We choose the partition with a heavy and worried heart";² the Belgian Foreign Minister hesitantly stated: "We are not sure that this solution is altogether just ... we are not even sure if it is practicable ... but what other choice can we make? It is this solution, or none at all."³

Nonetheless, the United Nations partition recommendation of 1947 heralded the cataclysm. The decision had given the Zionists, who held less than seven per cent of Palestine, about fifty-five per cent of the country.⁴ Moreover, the United Nations decision was a revolutionary one designed to effect a radical redistribution in favour of the Zionists. To succeed, the Zionists had to revolutionize the status quo; and action, initiative as well as armed attack were therefore the sine qua non for the realization of the Zionist objectives.⁵

For the Arabs, as well as for the rest of the Asian countries, the United Nations' decision took on the sense of a new 'crusade' by the

¹Badeau, P. 68.

²Childers, P. 72.

³Ibid.

⁴Jargy, P. 43.

⁵James G. McDonald, My Mission to Israel (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951), P. 145.

West, in imposing their wish on the Orient, despite their solemn affirmation regarding the right of self-determination of the people and their sovereignty.¹

The day that Palestine was abandoned by the British fell on a Saturday, May 15, 1948. The Jewish authorities, in order to observe their Sabbath proclaimed the State of Israel before sunset. It was proclaimed at 16 hours and 15 minutes by Ben-Gurion, in the Tel Aviv Museum where the ceremony was to take place, and the white and blue flag with the star of David was raised. For the Jews, this fateful date ushered in the proclamation of the State of Israel and for the Arabs, the pronouncement of war.

In the last analysis, the United Nations vote on the Partition of Palestine "in part was dictated by anxiety to offer a refuge to the displaced people, created the further problem of the refugees and therefore lost a great part of its moral justification."²

The Aftermath.—The logical consequence of the proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948 was a breaking out of the hostilities known as the First Arab-Israeli War, during which many innocent lives were sacrificed and a minimum of "750,000 Arab refugees created."³ Consequently, the United Nations formed a new organ in order to deal with the problems of the Palestinian refugees.

The Formation of the United Nations Emergency Force.—In the early spring of 1948, the Security Council took its first action on the

¹McDonald, P. 90.

²Alem, P. 197.

³The Economist, Vol. CCXXIV, No. 6462 (July, 1967), P. 20.

question of Palestine. This action was prompted by the increasing violence and political deterioration in the Middle East. Faced with the resulting difficulties, the Security Council adopted a Resolution (S147, April 1948) calling for a cease-fire in Palestine.¹

The ensuing violence was directly connected with the General Assembly's Partition Plan for Palestine (Resolution 181 (II), 29 November, 1947). This called for the creation of a Jewish state and an Arab state in Palestine, with economic union, and an international administration for Jerusalem. The plan was vehemently rejected by both the Arab states and the Palestinians and violence broke out when the Arab states resisted its implementation.²

Meanwhile, the General Assembly, in its Second Special Session (Resolution 186 ES-II), appointed a mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte, to cooperate with the Truce Commission in Palestine.³ When hostilities broke out between the Arab states and Israel, after the latter's proclamation of the State of Israel on May 15, 1948, the Truce Commission asked for military assistance and advisers. The Security Council, on May 29, 1948, pursuant to achieving a cease-fire in the area, decided that the UN mediator and the Truce Commission should jointly supervise the cease-fire. From this action came into existence the United Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), which stayed in operation in the Middle East for

¹United Nations, General Assembly, The United Nations Emergency Force (A/3276, November 4, 1950), P. 3.

²Ibid.

³E.L.M. Burns, Between Arab and Israeli (New York: Ivan Obolensky, Inc., 1963), P. 187.

twenty years.¹ The General Assembly, on November 4, 1950, under the terms of the "Uniting for Peace Resolution", adopted a resolution for a plan for a United Nations Emergency Force; the General Assembly:

Requests, as a matter of priority, the Secretary-General to submit within forty-eight hours a plan for the setting up, with the consent of the nations concerned, of an emergency international United Nations Force, to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities in accordance with all the terms of the aforementioned (November 2) resolution.²

A brain-child of the Canadian delegation headed by Mr. L.B. Pearson, the November 4 Resolution was adopted with 57 votes in favour, 0 against, and 19 abstentions, including the USSR;³ and UNEF was created.

¹Burns, P. 187.

²United Nations, General Assembly, The United Nations Emergency Force, P. 3.

³Burns, P. 187.

CHAPTER V

ARAB COUNTRIES AND ISRAEL IN THE COLD WAR

The 'Palestine Conflict' Enters the International Scene.--In the post-war era, the Middle East was looked upon exclusively as a strategic and military area. It seems that, to the West, at least, this region constituted a continuation of the NATO defense system established in Europe to guarantee Western petrol, as well as other economic interests, against the Soviet Union. Perhaps, it was also designed to safeguard the sovereignty of young emerging states against Communist infiltration. But, unfortunately, true to the dictates of their tradition and customs, the Western powers considered the Middle East as their exclusive fief, and even as a private hunt.¹ Therefore, it is not surprising that the Palestinian conflict itself was from the beginning, only a secondary part of this global strategy. The solution to the problem of the refugees, in a purely economic context, had to be conceived within the framework of an organization for the common defense of the Middle East, under the auspices of the West.²

Post-war conditions had already defined and accentuated certain profound rivalries and divergences between the three Western powers interested in the Middle East. The Anglo-Saxons made an effort to eliminate France from the Eastern scene and Anglo-American economic

¹Jargy, P. 100.

²Ibid., P. 99.

competition virtually excluded any Soviet interest in the area. But, political flirtations on the part of some of the major Arab countries with the USSR rendered obsolete and soon ineffective the joint efforts of the Western powers in the Middle East.¹

Western rivalries existed parallel to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Anglo-American design was to include the Middle East in an anti-Soviet defense system which would extend the Atlantic Pact. The United States, persuaded by Great Britain to assume responsibility in the Middle East, in order to secure American and Western interests in the area, established a security system to check the Soviet threat. This was the M.E.D.O. (Middle East Defense Organization) project which had absorbed Western diplomacy since 1950.²

The Baghdad Pact.--For a proper functioning of this project, it was necessary to obtain the adherence of the Islamic countries in the Middle East. A first step was accomplished by the conclusion of the 1954 Turko-Pakistani Pact. The two ends of the Islamic world had rallied. The participation of the rest was of prime importance. However, for Arab countries to enter the Ankara-Karachi alliance, it was becoming imperative first to solve the Palestinian problem. Israel, too, had to find its place among the Arabs. On the other hand, it was necessary that no Arab state should be tempted to use against Israel, weapons delivered by Western powers. No adherence meant no armament from the West.³

Later developments seem to indicate that it was a psychological and

¹Jargy, P. 99.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., P. 100.

tactical mistake of the West to miscalculate the reactions of Arab opinion, especially the belief that the Arab Governments would accede confidentially to such an alliance, by-passing the Arab masses.¹

Memories of Arab struggles against Western domination and the First Arab-Israeli war were too vivid to allow such historical and psychological factors to be ignored.² For the Arabs, Israel remained the arch-enemy. Communism and the USSR, by comparison, were distant threats, not to be heeded; indeed, a fundamental optical difference between the Occident and the Orient.

Egypt, as one of the principal Arab countries, remained opposed to the plan. On the other hand, Britain succeeded in persuading its staunch ally, the Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri Said, to announce in February 1955 the adherence of his country to the Ankara-Karachi defense pact, christened henceforward, the Baghdad Pact.³ For Egypt, the Baghdad Pact was tantamount to a camouflage; for the Soviet Union, however, a sheer provocation.⁴

France denounced this deal. She warned the West of the dangers involved in such a rash decision to put pressure on the Iraqi Government to adhere to the Anglo-American defense system. According to Paris, public opinion in Iraq, as well as elsewhere in the Arab world, was not prepared to accept the hurried entry of Arab countries into a Western

¹Jargy, P. 102.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., P. 103.

⁴Alem, P. 180.

military pact on the side of Israel.¹

The Soviet Entry in the Middle East.—The Soviet Union could no longer remain a spectator in the face of this development: namely, the creation of the Baghdad Pact. In the Soviets' view this pact had the sole aim of undermining their security. Andrei Gromyko had expressed the fear that, "the Soviet Union cannot remain indifferent in the face of the situation existing at present with regard to the creation of the above-mentioned blocs."² The establishment "of the military bases on the territories of the Near and Middle East countries has an immediate bearing on the security of the Soviet Union."³

In the tense atmosphere created by the Baghdad Pact, and with Palestine conflict still alive, the stand taken by the Soviet Union made a profound impression on the Arab leaders and nationalists. The outbreak of the Arab-Israeli crisis was soon to give Moscow the opportunity of affirming its long-standing dreams of being present in the Near East.⁴

The Nationalization of the Suez Canal Company.—The situation became dangerously aggravated by the suspension of negotiations between Egypt and the United States regarding the financing of the Aswan Dam. To find the necessary resources, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal Company in July 1956.⁵ The legal aspect of the nationalization of the Suez Canal falls

¹A.M. Goichon, "Les Réfugiés Palestiniens," Revue Esprit, No. 7 (1964), P. 78.

²Jargy, P. 103.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., P. 104.

⁵Rouleau, 3e Combat, P. 115.

beyond the scope of this study. It is sufficient to note, however, that by nationalizing the Suez Canal Company, Nasser created tremendous complications.

On October 23, 1956, an Anglo-Franco-Israeli attack was launched against Egypt. The Kremlin authorities¹ came to the rescue of Egypt, however. Shortly after that episode, the USSR was found again at the side of Syria in a similarly friendly role. As a consequence, the successors of Peter the Great and Catherine II found themselves in the Mediterranean region.²

Over a long period of time, Great Britain had used every possible means to prevent Russian access to the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. To this end, she had given support to the Sultan and, later to the countries which had been emancipated from her suzerainty. Furthermore, in the Saadabad Pact she grouped together Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, following this move by the Baghdad Pact and the CENTO. This traditional antagonism between the Maritime and the Continental powers was always aimed at maintaining the barriers to Russian entry. However, by a tremendous political leap, the Soviet Union reversed the position established against her by her rivals.³

¹/In fact a disinclination on the part of both the US and the USSR to prevent the success of the Anglo-Franco-Israeli coalition seems to have been the active agent./

²Dib, P. 14.

³Ibid., P. 15.

CHAPTER VI

TOWARDS A THIRD ROUND

The Infernal Cycle.--By April 1, 1967, it had already become apparent that the Israeli-Syrian dispute was not confined to cultivation rights in the demilitarized zone. As tensions grew between the Israeli and Syrian armed forces, General Odd Bull, Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), appealed on May 4 to the parties involved to observe the cease-fire and to resolve their differences through the Israeli-Syrian Mixed Armistice Commission (ISMAL).¹

Around May 10, President Nasser received four reports from different intelligence services - his own, the Soviets, the Syrian and the Lebanese - concerning the Israeli deployment of troops along the Syrian borders. The contents of the reports convinced Nasser that an Israeli attack to overthrow the Syrian regime was imminent.² Furthermore, a declaration by the Israeli officials published by the British news on May 12, affirmed Israel's intention to overthrow the Damascus regime. General Rabin admitted: "We have tried everything to prevent the activities of the Fedayeen. We are left with no other choice but to overthrow the Damascus regime."³ However, the Israeli Government denied any such concentration of troops on the border.

¹Rouleau, 3e Combat, P. 74.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

Whether Israel in fact contemplated an attack on May 17, as Nasser expected, or later, is difficult to know for sure. Nonetheless, Nasser was convinced that the crucial hour was approaching.¹ Israeli officials had not denied their intention of attacking the Ba'athist regime of Syria. Furthermore, reprisal operations had become progressively larger since July-August, 1966. Military clashes had multiplied to culminate in the aerial raid of April 7, 1967, on Syria. These attacks did not, however, prevent the incursion of Syrian trained Fedayeens into Israel.²

Regarding the question as to what convinced Nasser of an Israeli attack, it is as well to explore the factors which played a part in shaping the events of June, 1967. The ever-presence of the 1956 joint-invasion of the Anglo-Franco-Israeli on Egypt had instilled the fear that Israel would try again, should the opportunity arise.³ The apprehension provides the background to the event that followed during the Spring of 1967. Both Egypt and Syria were convinced that Israel was preparing for another attack. Levi Eshkol's warning that Israel would carry out military retaliation against Syria was considered serious by both Egypt and Syria, mainly because of the Israeli retaliation against the Jordanian village of El Sammu in November, 1956.⁴ Furthermore, the absence of heavy military equipment during Israel's Independence Day

¹Rouleau, P. 74.

²Arthur Lall, The UN and the Middle East Crisis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), P. 15

³John S. Badeau, "The Arabs, 1967," The Atlantic, CCXX (December, 1967), P. 102.

⁴Rouleau, P. 74.

parade added to their suspicions, that the troops might be deployed along the Syrian borders. This suspicion was confirmed by the Soviets in May, 1967, when they detected a concentration of military equipment along the borders of Syria.¹

In the light of these facts, Egypt's fear that the United States and Great Britain might be induced to take measures similar to those taken in 1956 can be understood. Egypt's relations with both the United States and Great Britain had deteriorated steadily in the mid-sixties; American aid to Egypt had practically stopped and by 1967 President Nasser was convinced rightly or wrongly, that American Arab policy had taken on an unfavourable trend, undermining his position.²

By contrast, American support of Israel, together with the memory of the 'carefully concealed Anglo-French involvement' in the 1956 incident, seemed reasonable grounds for confirmation of the Arab suspicion that an Anglo-American connivance lay behind Israel's alarming pronouncements and reported military deployment along Syria's borders.³

Egypt's main preoccupation seems to have been her determination not to be caught by a surprise attack, as had happened in 1956. Nasser also hoped that the world community, through the United Nations, would not allow another outbreak of hostility between Israel and the Arab states.⁴

Although the bitter experience of the Suez crisis provided the

¹Randolph S. Churchill and Winston S. Churchill, The Six Day War (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967), P. 28.

²Badeau, P. 69.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

framework within which the Arabs took action during the months of May 1967, there were other important considerations which bore directly on the Arab relations as a whole, and Egypto-Syrian in particular.¹

After Syria's secession from the U.A.R., in 1961, both Syria and Egypt engaged in a prolonged cold war and rivalry, each contending to be the true heir of the Arab Revolution. Syria and its Ba'ath Party considered itself as the apostle of Arab socialism. On the other hand, Nasser claimed to be the symbol of Arab unity and Arab Revolution but was rejected by the Syrian Party. Syria had based her claim to such leadership on her firm stand with regard to Israel.²

From Egypt's point of view, Syria's policies towards Israel could neither be overtly repudiated nor wholeheartedly pursued. Thus, the Syrian dilemma became more than a problem of Arabs vis-à-vis Israel; it became the enfant terrible of Arab unity. However, after five years of tension, Egypt took the initiative and created an entente cordiale with Syria, which resulted in a defensive alliance in 1966.³

Viewed from the perspective of Israel's relations with her neighbours, this alliance could rightly be interpreted as a move against her. Ironically, it was in fact conceived as a device to curb Syria's relentless actions against Israel, which might involve Egypt in an unwanted conflict. The same line of reasoning was behind the creation of the United Military Command; Egypt was to take over the command of the

¹Badeau, P. 69.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

Arab armed forces in order to prevent any unilateral action against Israel.¹

At the peak of the tension between Syria and Israel, in the Spring of 1967, when Syria was severely attacked by Israel, it was Syria who pressed Egypt to comply with her commitments. Thus, Egypt was drawn into this conflict by the aggressive policies of Syria towards Israel.²

Another reason for Egypt's action, independent of the Suez-phobia, was the precarious position of Egypt vis-à-vis the rest of the Arab World.

With the secession of Syria from the U.A.R., in 1961, and Egyptian setbacks in Yemen, Egypt's position of leadership was gravely undermined. The Egyptian sponsored unified military command began to fall apart. The divisions in the Arab League were so pronounced that Arab states could not agree on a summit meeting to discuss their problems. Thus, Egypt found itself isolated from the rest of the Arab world.³

As the largest Arab State, Egypt's influence could not be ignored in Arab politics, a factor which went beyond the personality of President Nasser. Egypt, being the birth-place of the Arab Revolution and the crossroads of international relations, and having the largest armed forces, was undoubtedly an important Arab state not to be by-passed in intra-Arab politics.⁴

¹Rouleau, P. 69.

²Ibid.

³Badeau, P. 70.

⁴Ibid., P. 78.

In terms of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1967, the ingredients of a crisis were present "in the situation and in the Arab suspicion of Israel's intent."¹ However, as the crisis developed, Egypt may have seen an opportunity to regain its natural leadership of the Arab world.² It seems that President Nasser did not wish for war, possibly because a good portion of his troops were engaged in Yemen, he chose instead, a course mid-way between war and no war - that of dissuasion.³ He publicly dramatized the situation: he ordered the troops to march in unity through the streets of Cairo, in a manner reminiscent of the French troops parading through the Place de la Concorde, on their way to the German frontier!⁴ Similarly the Egyptian troops reached the Israeli border. For the bluff to appear serious, Nasser felt obliged to demand the withdrawal of the United Nations troops which were stationed on the borders of the two countries. However, as a further precaution, Nasser did not personally request U Thant to withdraw the troops. This step would have taken on an official and irreversible character. Instead, the request was conveyed to General Rikhye, Commander of the UN forces, by his Egyptian counterpart.⁵ On May 16, General Rikhye received a letter from General Fawzy, Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Armed Forces, stating:

¹Rouleau, P. 76.

²Badeau, P. 78.

³Ibid.

⁴Rouleau, P. 76.

⁵Badeau, P. 78.

I have my instructions to all U.A.R. armed forces to be ready for action against Israel, the moment it might carry out any aggressive action against any Arab country. Due to these instructions our troops are already concentrated in Sinai on our Eastern borders.¹

The UNEF Withdrawal.---On May 18, the Egyptian Government formally requested the UN Secretary-General to withdraw the UN Emergency Force troops from its territory.² The UNEF had been successful in creating a buffer zone along the Gaza Strip and at Sharm-el-Sheikh, near the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba, for eleven years.³

Following U Thant's agreement to the request for withdrawal, Egypt on May 23, declared the Gulf closed to Israeli shipping and any other ships carrying strategic goods to Israel.⁴ The Secretary-General, upon his arrival in Cairo, warned President Nasser of the "dangerous consequences" which might follow from his blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba.⁵

In a speech given on the occasion of the Egyptian Air Force Day, on May 23, President Nasser summed up his position:⁶

On May 12, a very important statement was made that Israeli Commanders have announced that they would carry out military operations against Syria in order to occupy Damascus and overthrow the Syrian Government. On May 13, we received accurate information that Israel was concentrating on the Syrian border huge armed forces of about 11 to 13 brigades. The decision made by Israel at this time was to carry out an aggression against Syria on May 17. On

¹United Nations, Document (A/6669, May 18, 1967), P. 4.

²Ibid.

³Lall, P. 15.

⁴United Nations, Document (A/6672), P. 20.

⁵Ibid.

⁶The New York Times, May 23, 1967, P. 2.

May 14, we took our measures. The forces began to move in the direction of Sinai to take up position ... On May 16, we requested the withdrawal of the UN Emergency Force ... If there is a true desire for peace, we say that we also work for peace. But does peace mean that we should ignore the rights of the Palestinian people because of lapse of time?¹

The late Israeli Prime Minister, speaking at a press conference at Tel-Aviv on May 5, blamed the Arab states for starting the war, declaring that Israel had informed the Security Council that she was only invoking Article 51 of the UN Charter, which permits the right of member states to act in self-defense, and that Israel was fighting to "frustrate the attempt of Arab armies to capture our land, to break their wall of encirclement and the seige of aggression that has been established around us."²

Similarly, Moshe Dayan, Israel's then newly appointed Defense Minister, declared in a radio message on June 25: "We have no aim at territorial conquest. Our sole objective is to bring to nought the attempt of the Arab armies to conquer our country, and to destroy the encircling blockade and aggression."³ Both the United States and the United Kingdom declared their intention of pursuing a neutral course in the conflict; the United States, however, was soon to modify its stand in the conflict. France reinforced her neutrality, on June 5, by announcing a suspension of shipments of military equipment to the Middle East.⁴

¹The New York Times, May 23, 1967, P. 2.

²The New York Times, May 5, 1967, P. 2.

³Ibid.

⁴Randolph & Churchill, P. 28.

Moreover, the failure of the Advisory Committee to request an immediate session of the General Assembly with regard to the situation, was an admission of the ineffectiveness of such forces in the light of the terms of its mandate contained in Resolution 1001 (ES-1).¹

After meeting with the Advisory Committee of UNEF on May 18, U Thant stated that he had no alternative but to comply with the U.A.R.'s request. Some representatives felt, however, that the Secretary-General should have clarified previously, with the Government of the U.A.R., the precise meaning of its request that the withdrawal of the UNEF should take place "as soon as possible."²

On May 18, the British Foreign Secretary, George Brown, speaking at a dinner for the UN Association in London, assailed U Thant's decision to withdraw the UNEF, saying "it really makes a mockery of the peace-keeping force of the United Nations if, as soon as tension rises, the UN force is told to leave ... indeed, the collapse of UNEF might well have repercussions on other UN peace-keeping forces, and the credibility of the United Nations's efforts in this field are thrown into question."³

Similarly, Levi Eshkol, in his address to the Knesset, on May 22, criticised U Thant's precipitous action on the basis that the former Secretary-General, the late Dag Hammarskjold, had assured Israel that on

¹Hal Kosut (ed.), Israel and the Arabs: the June 1967 War (New York: Facts on File Publication, 1968), P. 70.

²United Nations, General Assembly, A report prepared by the Secretary-General on the Withdrawal of the UNEF, (A/6730, June 3, 1967), P. 8.

³The Sunday Times (London), May 25, 1967, P. 2.

a decision to withdraw the UNEF it would be "the Secretary-General's obligation to inform the Advisory Committee on the UNEF, which would determine whether the matter should be brought to the attention of the Assembly."¹

The text of the request did not make it explicit that a total withdrawal of the UN forces was demanded; nor was any mention made of the "blue caps being replaced by the Egyptian forces at Charm-el-Sheikh."² At this stage, the whole affair was still a purely local matter. General Rikhye replied, "I am not authorized to take such a measure; ... President Nasser alone has the right to make such a request from U Thant."³ At this point, Nasser had no other choice than to put forward to U Thant the demand for withdrawal. It should be noted that the demand for withdrawal of the UNEF from Charm-el-Sheikh was not mentioned. All evidence points to the fact that President Nasser did not intend, at this stage at least, to close the straits of Tiran to Israeli navigation.⁴

U Thant's reaction, to say the least, was surprising. Since the UNEF could not be shifted around without undermining its effectiveness, U Thant ordered the total withdrawal of the UNEF from Egypt. Consequently, the withdrawal of the UNEF dramatised the already tense situation in the area and changed the Israeli attitude in favor of war. Until

¹The Jerusalem Post Weekly, December 2, 1968, PP. 10-11.

²Rouleau, P. 77.

³Lall, P. 21.

⁴Ibid.

then, Israel was convinced that, being involved in Yemen, Egypt would not risk a military confrontation with her.¹

By his action, U Thant put Nasser in an extremely embarrassing situation; President Nasser had no choice but to request the total withdrawal of the UNEF.²

Once again, the Secretary-General behaved in a curious way; instead of consulting the Big Powers or convening the Security Council, he complied with Nasser's request without hesitation. Nasser was empowered by the UNEF to ask for its withdrawal but he was under the impression that U Thant, and the United Nations as a whole, would resist his demand, thus allowing him to set forth his strategy and launch the diplomatic crisis as he wished. However, the Secretary-General's rash decision came as a great surprise to the Egyptian officials, including Nasser.

Two contradictory hypotheses were presented to explain U Thant's behaviour: some believed that he wished to put the Americans in a difficult position in the Middle East, in order to force a progressive disengagement in Viet Nam;³ the other group held the view, however, that he had been encouraged by the Americans, who wished to call Nasser's bluff and to strike a blow at his prestige. The upholders of the latter hypothesis believed that the Americans had wanted Nasser's head, so to

¹Uri Avnery, Israel Without Zionists: a Plea for Peace in the Middle East (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1968), P. 25.

²Rouleau, P. 78.

³Ibid.

speak, for some time now and knew that the time was ripe to humiliate him and possibly, bring about his downfall.¹

On the other side of this complex political network were Nasser's opponents who, from the outset, looked suspiciously upon the UNEF as the foreign force stationed on Egyptian soil, for the sole purpose of assuring the right of navigation to Israeli shipping in the Strait of Tiran. They would not have hesitated to discredit Nasser, in front of the Arab masses, for such duplicity.² Nevertheless, Nasser resisted such pressures and allegations. He also knew that the closure of the Strait of Tiran would be considered a casus belli by Israel. He had expressed some apprehension to the Syrian and Iraqi officials who were at a conference in Cairo, in April 1963. They had suggested to Nasser that "it was time to demand the withdrawal of the UNEF."³ It was humiliating that the Arabs, after the Suez expedition of 1956, still encouraged Israel's commercial relations with Africa and the rest of Asia. "You must prevent Israel's ships passing through the Strait of Tiran."⁴ To these requests, Nasser had replied that such an action on their part would mean an invitation to open hostilities, precisely at a time when Arab countries were not in a position to win the war.⁵ During 1967,

¹Rouleau, P. 78.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., P. 80.

⁴Ibid., P. 81.

⁵Vincent Monteil, "Le Problème du Moyen-Orient," No. D 4554, (Genève, 1968), P. 8.

Nasser's decision remained unchanged.

It is quite possible that, U Thant's attitude may have contributed a great deal to the outbreak of war in 1967.¹ Also, while the menace to Syria seemed very real, it may be assumed that Nasser indeed made a great error of judgement in attempting to intimidate his opponent. He paid dearly for this mistake.

On May 15, 1967, Radio Cairo officially announced the deployment of the Egyptian troops into Sinai. On May 16, Israel ordered the mobilization of her reserves.² Until May 19, Israel's attitude towards the Egyptian move, if anything at all, was hardly alarming. But news of Egypt's transfer of troops from the Yemen into Sinai brought events onto an ominous path. This was indeed the turning point, when the Hebrew Government regarded the situation as "very serious."³

The Editor-in-Chief of the Al-Ahram, Mohammad Hassanein Heikal, had given an explanation of the Egyptian deployment to the effect that it assumed an "offensive position,"⁴ primarily to draw Israel's attention away from the Syrian border over to the Egyptian border. "Once the aim of such a distraction has been achieved, the troops are to return to a "defensive position."⁵

¹Rouleau, P. 80.

²Monteil, P. 10.

³Theodore Draper, Israel and the World Politics: Roots of the Third Arab-Israeli War (New York: The Viking Press, 1967), P. 75.

⁴The Al-Ahram (Cairo), October 6, 1967, P. 1.

⁵Ibid.

Thereupon, Nasser's statement that his troops would come to the aid of Syria tolled in Israel. As one Israeli expressed it: "... by posing the threat to our frontiers, he [President Nasser] rang the bell hidden in the unconscious mind of every Israeli; a signal which turns Israel, within minutes, from a peaceful country into an armed camp."¹

The Blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba.—The third portentous move occurred with the Egyptian army taking up their position in the Strait of Tiran, filling the vacuum created by the withdrawal of the UN forces. This action, whether Nasser wanted or not, meant blockade of the Israeli ships, and an Israeli retaliatory measure to open up the Strait by force.² The credibility of the Israeli army was at stake at this point; Israel could not afford to retreat.³

As was feared, Nasser announced the Strait of Tiran closed to Israeli shipping on May 22, stating that mines had been laid in the Strait. After the war, however, it was disclosed that none had been laid. The explanation given for such a false statement, or the 'white lie', was that Egypt hoped that such a move might prevent Israeli ships from entering the Strait, thereby relieving Egyptian forces from the need to fire.⁴ In other words, President Nasser's last hope of averting the war unfortunately produced the adverse affect and accelerated the crisis.⁵

¹Avnery, P. 75.

²Churchill & Churchill, P. 30.

³Avnery, P. 75.

⁴Rouleau, P. 79.

⁵Avnery, P. 26.

To what extent the Port of Elath, whose closure was considered a casus belli, constituted the vital route for Israeli shipping it is difficult to judge. However, according to the words of Eric Rouleau, the blockade of the Port of Elath was not for the Israelis, so to speak, a question of life and death. Elath handled only 5 per cent of the total commerce, while less than 3 per cent was affected by the closure of the Gulf of Aqaba. This was because only a fraction of Israeli shipping passed through this merchant traffic.¹ What was really affected, in fact, was the delivery of petroleum. Here again, until 1956 petroleum was being shipped through Haifa, which is why the Egyptian Government did not consider it altogether serious when the Israeli Government talked of the closure as the casus belli.²

On May 22, U Thant sent a telegram to President Nasser, requesting an interview. Nasser accepted immediately, hoping that an honorable solution might be found. The two men met in a secret session in Cairo, to find a way out of the impasse; they reached the following agreement:

- 1) that the parties involved should abstain from actions which might aggravate the already tense situation;
- 2) that a special representative should be nominated to mediate between Cairo-Tel-Aviv concerning a solution to the Tiran conflict;
- 3) that the Secretary-General should make an appeal to all the maritime powers to postpone delivery of strategic materials to the Port of Elath and reroute them, instead, to the Port of Haifa, as was done before 1956.³

¹Rouleau, P. 61.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., P. 83.

A week later, President Johnson of the United States, sent his special envoy, Mr. Charles Yost, to Cairo. He was not given an audience by President Nasser himself; the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mahmoud Riad, met him and an agreement on the three following points was concluded:

- a) The problem must be solved through diplomatic channels and in a pacific manner.
- b) Egypt would have no objection to the Tiran case being presented to the International Court of Justice, in the Hague.
- c) Zakaria Moheiuiddin, the First Vice-President of the Republic, should go to Washington for negotiations for a compromise acceptable to both parties.¹

After giving assurances that Israel would not attack as long as the diplomatic channels remained open, Charles Yost left Cairo on Saturday, June 3, precisely two days prior to the outbreak of hostilities.²

Meanwhile, war propaganda was used in an attempt to avert the impending confrontation, by impressing the Israeli Government of the superiority of the Arab army and enabling Nasser to win a bloodless victory. It had, indeed the opposite affect in Israel. Likewise, as a possible means of avoiding imminent war, Nasser signed a military pact with Jordan. This hasty military alliance was the decisive factor in Israel's decision to go to war.³

In the wake of the Egypto-Jordanian defense pact, the Israeli Government, until then torn between the hawks and the doves, decided to

¹Rouleau, P. 83.

²Walter Laqueur, The Road to Jerusalem: the Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1967 (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1968), P. 174.

³Ibid.

go to war. Moshe Dayan, the most anti-Arab Israeli, was appointed to the post of Defense Minister. Military plans were made in no time, and Israel was ready to strike.¹

President Nasser's May 28 Press Conference.---In his Press Conference, President Nasser suggested that a reactivation of the mixed Egypto-Israeli Armistice Commission was becoming necessary. This move could result in the withdrawal of both the Egyptian and Israeli troops from the two sides of the frontier. He also requested a global conference on the Palestinian issue and negotiation on the pending problem by the mediating powers.² He also pointed out that the Tiran Conflict had but a secondary position in the Arab-Israeli conflict: that "the issue which is precipitating the war is neither the Gulf of Aqaba nor the Strait of Tiran nor the withdrawal of the UNEF but the rights of the Palestinian people."³

In the final analysis, the Aqaba crisis had three phases:

- 1) President Nasser's bluff to divert an attack against Syria;
- 2) the escalation which brought them to the edge of war;
- 3) President Nasser's mad hope of trying to evade war by drawing a major political victory: that of keeping the sovereignty over the Strait of Tiran, in exchange for certain concessions to Israel. This was, in fact, the purpose of Zakaria Moheiuiddin's visit to Washington.⁴

Likewise, Nasser had dreamed of a global negotiation. Cairo officials believed that Nasser was ready to make concessions in view of the

¹Avnery, P. 30.

²Rouleau, P. 83.

³The New York Times, June 10, 1967, P. 2.

⁴Rouleau, P. 91.

global discussions, from which he had hoped to emerge, once again, strong in the eyes of the Arab world.¹ The 1956 crisis, in fact, had bestowed upon Nasser the stature of a national hero and an undisputed leader of the Arab world. This, too, was what he was hoping to regain from this crisis.²

¹Rouleau, P. 91.

²Badeau, P. 87.

CHAPTER VII

THE THIRD ARAB-ISRAELI WAR

The Six-Day War.—On June 5, 1967, Israel practically destroyed Egypt's aviation, on the ground. In six days her troops occupied Sinai, the Gaza Strip, west of the Jordan river, the Syrian zone of Qanetra and the Old City of Jerusalem. Why? The pretext was the closure of the Strait of Tiran by Egypt and the withdrawal of the United Nations Emergency Forces from the Gaza Strip. But Egypt had not signed, in March 1957, the agreement on the Rights of Navigation in the Strait of Tiran, for less than one mile on each side.¹

Moreover, this could not have been the casus belli, because, as mentioned earlier, only 5 per cent of the Israeli exporting commercial ships and only 2 per cent of the Israeli navy passed Elath.

To stop the fighting, the UN Security Council met almost continuously from June 5 through the 12, in an effort to achieve a cease-fire in the area. After the adoption of a cease-fire resolution, in an address to the Council, Abba Eban stated that his country welcomed the resolution, but its implementation "depended on ... acceptance and cooperation of the other parties," who were responsible for the situation; that a new Middle Eastern settlement should be constructed after the cease-fire and must depend upon certain principles:

¹Jean-Francis Held, Israel et les Arabes, le 3e Combat (Paris: Edition de Seuil, 1967), P. 91.

the first of these principles must surely be the acceptance of Israel's statehood and the total elimination of the fiction of non-existence ... the second, must be that of a peaceful settlement of disputes ... through direct contact.¹

It would be well to note that the 'Palestine Conflict', as the issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict over the past 20 years, was totally omitted by the Israeli Government in the new would-be peace settlement. This indicates that, after those years of fighting, the parties to the dispute had not yet agreed on the real cause of the trouble.

Likewise, Abba Eban questioned the usefulness of the United Nations Emergency Force, asking "if it is in effect an umbrella which is taken away as soon as it begins to rain."²

In short, the Security Council finally managed to achieve a cease-fire and reactivated the United Nations Truce Supervision Office (UNTSO). The latter was made more effective by the fact that all parties to the dispute consented.³

On the other hand, as a result of a letter from the Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko to the Secretary-General, the Fifth Emergency Special Session was convened. Mr. Gromyko's letter, dated June 13, 1967, referred to Article 11 of the Charter of the United Nations, which authorizes the General Assembly to consider any question having a bearing upon international peace and security.⁴

¹Laqueur, P. 124.

²Kosut, P. 99.

³United Nations, Security Council, Especial Session on the Middle East Crisis (Resolution 235, June 7, 1967), P. 11.

⁴Lall, P. 118.

In the ensuing debates of the Fifth Emergency Session, the Arab position was defended by the Prime Minister of the Sudan, Mr. M.A. Mahgoub. On the question of the legalities of the blockade of the Strait of Tiran, in support of Egypt, he stated that:

Israel claimed a belligerent's right of retaliation on Syria in April 1967. The United Nations found that Israel was not justified in this and censored Israel. But, even if it were justified, Egypt could certainly exercise a comparable and less bloody belligerent right, namely, to close the Strait of Tiran to strategic cargo for Israel.¹

Furthermore, Mr. Mahgoub asserted that Elath had been occupied almost a month after the parties had signed the Armistice Agreement of February 1949. He added that, granting the cause of provocation was Egyptian propaganda and by the Arab army within its frontiers, "the action taken by Israel was not legitimate self-defense, within the meaning of Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, because no armed attack on her territory had in fact taken place."²

Speaking on behalf of Israel, on the other hand, Abba Eban proposed that, "in free negotiations with each of our neighbors, we shall offer durable and just solutions rebounding to our mutual advantage and honor."³ His statement, despite its cordial spirit, left undefined the more basic and urgent questions, such as the fate of the conquered territories. From the perspective of the United Nations Charter - Israel being one of its Member States, matters such as withdrawal from the occupied territories fall within the scope of the United Nations Charter -

¹Lall, P. 131.

²Ibid., P. 139.

³Ibid., P. 140

this problem is not one which could be left to negotiations, unless those negotiations were carried out within the framework of the United Nations.¹

At least, the Fifth Emergency Session of the General Assembly achieved, in principle, the agreement of all the parties involved on the following three points: 1) conquest of territory by force was inadmissible; 2) peace in the Middle East had long been overdue; and, 3) freedom of states involved, from the threat of hostilities.²

U Thant's Defense of the UNEF Withdrawal.—The Secretary-General of the United Nations, U Thant, submitted a report on June 27 to the General Assembly, in defense of his May 18 decision to comply with Egypt's request for the withdrawal of the UN forces from the troubled area shortly before the outbreak of hostilities. The report stated that, " ... criticism of this nature would be damaging to the United Nations in general, and its peace-keeping role in particular."³ He tried to absolve himself from the charges against his precipitous action which caused the war in the Middle East. He was also charged with deliberately ignoring the contents of a personal Aide-mémoire of the late UN Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, to the effect that on August 5, 1957, he had persuaded the Egyptian Government to limit its "sovereign right in the interest of ... the UNEF operation."⁴ U Thant

¹Lall, P. 140.

²Ibid., P. 188.

³United Nations, General Assembly, Document, A Report prepared by the Secretary-General U Thant on the Withdrawal of the UNEF (A/6730/Additional, June 3, 1967), P. 8.

⁴Ibid.

declared that the outbreak of hostilities was not precipitated by the UNEF withdrawal, but by the "continuing Arab-Israeli conflict."¹ UNEF's effectiveness as a buffer zone was lost as soon as "direct confrontation between Israel and the United Arab Republic was revived after a decade, by the decision of the latter to move its forces up to the Armistice line"² This occurred before the formal U.A.R. request for the withdrawal of the UN force.

He also stated that Egypt had the right to terminate UNEF operations at any time and that this right had never been questioned. Since Israel had refused to allow UNEF troops on its soil, the effectiveness of the UNEF as a buffer force was wholly dependent "upon the voluntary action of the U.A.R. in keeping its troops away from the line."³

The right of Egypt to move up its troops to the Armistice line, therefore, could not be questioned.⁴ Once such a move had taken place, as it did on May 17, "UNEF could no longer perform any useful function in maintaining quiet, and its continuing presence on Egyptian territory lost its real significance."⁵

Likewise, on the question of the blockade, Egypt held that, being at war with Israel and the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba falling within

¹United Nations, General Assembly, Document, (A/6730/Additional), P. 8.

²Ibid., P. 18.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., P. 12.

⁵Ibid.

her territorial waters, she had the right to close it to Israeli shipping.¹ Egypt also claimed that Israel's right of passage had been imposed after the joint-attack on the Suez Canal in 1956.² Furthermore, the recapturing of the Gulf of Aqaba was in fact, at least in the eyes of the Arabs, a reassertion of Egypt's sovereign rights away from the grip of imperialism.³

The maximum width of the Gulf is over three miles and, as such, it was considered from a legal point of view to be the 'high seas'. But, Egypt and other Arab states do not recognize the three-mile limit; rather, they insist on a 12-mile limit. Legal experts pointed out that merchant vessels and perhaps warships, too, have the right of passage through territorial waters; and, " ... a coastal state could regulate the passage of ships, but could not prevent them altogether."⁴ Had the 12-mile limit been accepted by Egypt, the Strait of Tiran would then have constituted Egypt's territorial waters.⁵ However, Israel still had the right of passage according to International Law, which spells out that a sea can be closed, if all the states surrounding it agree. Israel, one of the littoral states, would not agree to the closing of the Strait of Tiran; it appears, then, that the blockade of Israeli shipping was illegal. But, Egypt does not recognize Israel. Therefore,

¹Laqueur, P. 74.

²Badeau, P. 102.

³Laqueur, P. 74.

⁴The Sunday Times (London), "Rights of Sea Passage," (June 4, 1967), P. 2.

⁵Ibid.

and in the last analysis, the question of the blockade is a "political question rather than a legal one."¹

There are four points regarding the United Nations Emergency Forces (UNEF), and its significant role in the 1967 War, which merit attention:

1) UNEF was conceived only as a temporary measure, with no specific duration.²

2) Its acceptance by Egypt, a necessary factor in its creation, followed by an Egyptian declaration that it would "be guided in good faith, in its acceptance of the General Assembly Resolution 1000 (ES-I) of November 5, 1956."³

This statement meant that Egypt was bound to observe the provisions of the Egypto-Israeli Armistice Agreement of 1949, including restraint from raids and the introduction of military equipment into the area. Thus, any action by Egypt or Israel, by virtue of Article VII of the Armistice Agreement, was limited in the Sinai area to "defense forces only."⁴

3) The United Nations, along with UNEF, should have developed measures for the stabilization of a peaceful situation in the Middle East. This section of Resolution 1125 (XI) was stressed by the

¹The Sunday Times, P. 2.

²United Nations, General Assembly, (A/3276, November 4, 1956), P. 3.

³Burns, P. 140.

⁴United Nations, General Assembly, (A/6669, May 18, 1967), P. 4.

Secretary-General, U Thant, in his report of May 18, 1967.¹

4) The General Assembly made no delegation of power regarding the termination of UNEF functions. In this case, the right of Egypt, as the state which had accepted UNEF on her soil, made the issue more complicated.² Israel, as a party to the dispute, had refused to cooperate with the General Assembly and the UNEF remained 'stillborn' on her borders.³

Egypt, on the other hand, had consented to the deployment of the UNEF troops on her territory, thus creating a duality by virtue of which UNEF could be disbanded either by the General Assembly or by Egypt.⁴

¹Lall, P. 12.

²Ibid., P. 15.

³Ibid., P. 16.

⁴Ibid.

CHAPTER VIII

A REASSESSMENT

At the outbreak of hostilities it was believed that Egypt had attacked first. Later events proved that the decision to strike first was taken by the Israeli Government.¹ Levi Eshkol admitted this in a declaration on July 8, 1967, followed by a similar statement by Moshe Dayan. Furthermore, Mr. Perès, the Israeli representative at the United Nations, stated that he intended to give a broader interpretation to the notion of legitimate defense.² To him, blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba characterized an aggression, which justified Israel in defending herself by military action. Such reasoning could prove very dangerous in circumstances in which the slightest difference of opinion among the belligerents could constitute a legitimate right to open hostilities.³

Nonetheless, as mentioned elsewhere, Egypt did not sign, in March 1957, the Agreement on the Right of Navigation in her territorial waters of less than a mile at her sides.⁴ Furthermore, Jean-Francis Held, Press Correspondant for Nouvelle Observateur, in Israel and an expressed Zionist sympathiser, was of the opinion that closure of the Strait of

¹Rouleau, P. 109.

²Monteil, P. 3.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

Tiran could not have constituted a legitimate casus belli, since only 5 per cent of Israeli commerce had been passing through Elath, of which "only 2 per cent was Israeli navigation. What had in fact been affected was the flow of petroleum, which, until 1956, was coming through Haifa."¹ However, it was later learned that Egypt was even prepared to authorize the passage of petroleum destined for the Port of Elath.²

On the other hand, Syria was menaced; and on May 12 the Israeli authorities declared their intention of overthrowing the Damascus regime, to put an end to the incursions of the Commandos.³

Again, according to Jean-Francis Held, "all the Israeli military potentials were assembled in such a formation that, technically speaking, it could not have been anything but an offensive."⁴ However, it seems that, a kind of psychological warfare existed for some time between them, even prior to the outbreak of actual hostilities, as will be explored shortly.

The Psychological Warfare.--It is true that Arab propaganda played an ill-fated role in the evolution of the crisis leading to the Third Arab-Israeli War of 1967. However, international political factors played an equally important part, which should not be underestimated.⁵

It is somewhat sad that Tel-Aviv, has always preferred to retain

¹Monteil, P. 3.

²Rouleau, P. 83.

³Monteil, P. 3.

⁴Held, Le 3e Combat, P. 107.

⁵Rouleau, P. 46.

the bellicose verbalism of Arab propaganda but to make an abstraction of the often reasonable behaviour of the Arab authorities.¹ There is some truth in the fact that Nasser had increased his attempts, ever since 1957, to avoid war with Israel. In particular, he prevented the Fedayeens from operating beyond Egyptian territory. For 11 years he maintained the "Blue Caps" on its frontiers, to ensure navigation rights for Israeli ships in the Gulf of Aqaba despite, some bitter disagreements between the Arab leaders.² Even on May 28, in an interview with the Press, President Nasser had affirmed that it was possible to open up a way for settlement, if Israel would agree to abide by the UN resolution.³

It should be borne in mind that the Arabs consider Israel an alien state, created by force in their land as an extension of foreign domination;⁴ and it still remains the symbol of imperialism against their national struggles. The Partition Plan of the United Nations, the Arabs claim, was carried out against the wishes of the majority of the people of Palestine, who constituted 2/3 of the total population of the whole area at the time, and Israel was given 40 per cent of the total cultivable land in Palestine, on the basis of 23 per cent Jewish ownership. Moreover, the votes for the Partition Plan (UN General Assembly, November 29, 1947) was received by virtue of the Western bloc,

¹Rouleau, P. 46.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Badeau, P. 103.

as well as by diplomatic pressures on the "client states."¹

The Arabs further claim that, under the United Nations Charter, the UN did not have authority to dispose of their land. Another factor, they point out, was Israel's unilateral policies from the dawn of its existence, in defiance of the international community:

1) On the eve of the creation of Israel, in 1948, by unprovoked attacks on Arab territories, the Zionist state occupied areas not included in the Partition Plan;²

2) Israel refused to participate in the UN Mixed Armistice Commission meetings. Furthermore, after the 1956 crisis, Israel again refused UN's request to allow UN Emergency Forces on her borders;³

3) Israel repeatedly disregarded the demilitarized boundaries' agreement and often extended land reclamation beyond those areas. This was the cause of border clashes with Syria in 1966-1967, which led, later in the same year, to open hostilities;⁴

4) The refugee problem ... after the creation of Israel, the refugee question was taken up by the UN General Assembly on December 11, 1948, when it was stated that, "refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practical date, and compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss and damage to

¹Badeau, P. 104.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Lacoutoure, P. 77.

property."¹

Israel, the Arabs claim, has failed to show any concern over the refugee problem, nor has she tried to implement the UN Resolution. Indeed, lack of such willingness by the Israeli Government is interpreted by the Arabs as a sign of anti-Arabism.²

The Arabs point also to a statement made in 1957 by General Yigal Allon, then Commander in the North, who said: "while planning the capture of the Arab part of Safed, it was not our intention to prevent the flight of the Arab population."³ It was also the aim of Ben-Gurion and his Government, to evict the Arab population during the 1948 war, and that by psychological intimidation, this aim was achieved.⁴ Contrary to Zionist propaganda, which claimed that the Arab Governments issued proclamations calling upon Arabs to leave their homes, Erskine Childers, and a few other writers, stated that they had examined all the monitored broadcasts from the Arab stations in 1948 and had not found a single clue implying that such an order had been issued.⁵

It is true that Israel's fundamental problem is a basic population imbalance. But, the Arabs claim that, "if a large increase in the Arab population of the country could be balanced by a proportionate increase in the Jewish population, Israel could, with international

¹Badeau, P. 104.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Goichon, P. 300.

assistance, cope with the resulting difficulties."¹ Such a measure would prove Israel's good faith and would induce Arab confidence in contributing constructively towards a settlement of this dilemma.

Unfortunately, the annexation of Arab Jerusalem not only defied the United Nations General Assembly Resolution but also acted as political dynamite, creating in the heart of Jerusalem the fetus of Arab resistance.²

As mentioned earlier, the Egyptians, as well as the rest of the Arab world, were suffering from the trauma of the Suez Affair. The Egyptians were persuaded that: 1) Israel was an aggressive state which sought only to impose certain solutions on the Arab world;³ 2) Israel was an expansionist state: with the conquest of Sinai, the Gaza Strip and the West Jordan, the Israelis insisted that there should be no withdrawal from the occupied territories without a peace settlement.⁴ This idea was not only voiced by M. Begin, who would have re-established Israel on the historical frontiers of Palestine, but also by the statements of Levi Eshkol, General Dayan and Yigal Allon, "who espoused the old Zionist claim, that Israel, by scriptural right, should extend to the banks of the Jordan river."⁵

¹Rudolph Detsiny, "Unity of Aims," The Economist, Vol. CCXXIV, No. 6464 (July 15, 1967), P. 176.

²Editorial, "A Matter of Form," The Economist, Vol. CCXXIV, No. 6467 (August 5, 1967), P. 481.

³Rouleau, P. 50.

⁴Editorial, "The Arabs Can't Just Wait," The Economist, Vol. CCXXIV, No. 6470 (August 26, 1967), P. 707.

⁵Ibid.

Moreover, the Egyptians were convinced that the United States was bent upon the overthrow of the Nasser regime. The Editor-in-Chief of the Al-Ahram, Hussanein Heikal, supported this view in several articles which appeared in 1967, to the effect that the Egypto-American relations had reached a breaking point. Similarly, when, on April 21, 1967, less than three weeks before the outbreak of the Israelo-Arab conflict, the coup d'état in Greece took place, it was immediately interpreted in Egyptian circles as one step closer towards the Middle East goal aimed at by the United States.¹ According to the confidential bulletin of the only Egyptian political Party, it was conjectured that, after the Athenian coup, it might well be the turn of the Government of Archbishop Makarios, because the Egyptians were convinced that the Americans were trying to establish a government of their choice to consolidate their position in the Eastern Méditerranéan.² It was reckoned, moreover, that the Americans would most probably attack Syria, the weakest point in the progressive Arab world. After which, they would carry out their ultimate objective of overthrowing Nasser's regime in Egypt.³ The day after the Athenian coup, it was the American foreign policy which Nasser attacked. He was convinced that America had decided to do away with the neutral or pro-Russian regimes all over the world. They would cite the fate of Sukarno and N'Krumah, as an example. They also held that the Anglo-American policies in Yemen and Aden were aimed at

¹Rouleau, P. 54.

²Gamal Abd-al-Nasser, Discours (Le Caire: Ministère de l'Information du Caire, 1967), P. 50.

³Ibid.

undermining the Egyptian regime.¹ This was strongly felt in Cairo.

On May 8, 1967, when two members of the Syrian Government arrived in Cairo to inform Nasser of Israel's preparations to launch a major attack to overthrow the Damascus regime, Nasser hesitated to commit himself to any help. Likewise, Marshal Amer was over-ruled, when he urged that the Arabs must strike first before actual fighting began.² Only after the USSR Intelligence Service had confirmed Israel's intention to attack Syria, on May 12, and the Israeli authorities had proclaimed their intention of overthrowing the Damascus regime and putting an end to the activities of the Palestinian Commandos, was Nasser convinced that his turn would be next. He had two alternatives: by avoiding involvement in the Syrian affair, he risked losing prestige among the Arab countries; or, by intervening, he risked being crushed by Israel.³

Nasser was conscious that in 1956 it was mainly due to President Eisenhower's intervention that Egypt was rescued from the Anglo-Franco-Israeli triangle attack. However, this sentiment was profoundly changed by the introduction of new elements: the nationalization of private enterprise in Egypt; the liberation of Egyptian communists from prison; the re-inforcement of relations with the USSR; the war in Yemen; and, finally, the agitations in Aden, which directly affected Anglo-American interests in the Persian Gulf.⁴ In fact, there had been a rupture of

¹Rouleau, P. 57.

²Ibid., P. 54.

³Gamal Abd-al-Nasser, Discours, P. 50.

⁴Ibid., P. 56.

diplomatic relations between Cairo and Washington. Furthermore, the American Government had stopped delivery of wheat to Egypt. Cairo was led to believe that the Americans sought to starve the Egyptians and to suffocate Nasser's economy, in order to pave the way for the eventual overthrow of the regime.¹ Nasser had not forgotten the Moslem Brothers' plot in 1965, supposedly, at the instigation of the C.I.A.²

To repeat, the Arabs think of Israel as an expansionist state. Their conviction is based on its three wars of expansion: the expansions of 1948 and Israel's insistence on keeping the territories as war booty, and the Sinai Campaign of 1956. Furthermore, the declarations made by Levi Eshkol that, "we are not disposed to cede a single inch of our land ..."³ and elsewhere, he added:

Palestine had already been amputated in the course of the First World War, following the Sykes-Picot Agreement; a second time during the creation of Jordan by Churchill, and a third time in 1948. We cannot endure a fourth amputation. It does not leave more than 20,000 kilometers of the ancient Palestine, and we have to think of the millions of Jews who, in the course of the next decade will emigrate from Russia, Western Europe and the United States.⁴

can only reconfirm Arab belief that Israel is an expansionist state. Moreover, Levi Eshkol considered not only a part of Iraq, but also parts of Syria and Transjordan, as constituting the territory of biblical Palestine. On the basis of these statements, the Arabs indeed feared

¹ Gamal Abd-al-Nasser, Discours, P. 56.

² Ibid.

³ Le Monde, January 13, 1967, P. 2.

⁴ Ibid.

that, given the opportunity, Israel would realize its dream.¹

On the other hand, since Israel, in the eyes of the Arabs, is an alien state, created by force in a "country rightly belonging to the Arabs,"² it is understandable that Nasser should request the withdrawal of UNEF and the closure of the Gulf of Aqaba, in order to win the applause of the rest of the Arab world.

To what extent the Soviet Union was responsible for the Arab action, is not easy to assess. The Soviet position in the Security Council, on the question of the blockade, indicated that Egypt had not consulted the Soviet Union's opinion. However, the conflict was welcomed by the Soviets, in so far as the tension had strengthened their position in the Middle East, while the United States was busy in Viet Nam. But, it seems that the Soviet Union had assumed that the United States would not allow Israel to engage in open hostilities. On the contrary, the United States would bring the matter to the attention of the United Nations Security Council where, the Soviet Union would carry on a diplomatic campaign in favor of the Arabs.³ It is obvious that the former had over-estimated the latter's strength: in the event of an attack, the Arab army could at least carry on the battle until United Nations intervention brought the matter to the Security Council for reconsideration.⁴ It is possible that, had the United Nations intervened in time,

¹ Alem, P. 110.

² Koestler, P. 29.

³ Badeau, P. 70.

⁴ Ibid.

Egypt would have scored a political victory. Its precarious leadership would have been consolidated; and, Arab unity would have been achieved. This may well be the reason for Nasser's voluntary plunge into a "game of brinkmanship."¹ Thus the interplay of these forces suffices to illustrate that, for three generations, the "Palestine Conflict" has been a decisive factor not only in intra-Arab politics but also in the relationship of the Arabs vis-à-vis Israel.²

Likewise, much has been said about the reasons underlying the belligerents' motives. If we allow ourselves to speculate, it is reasonable to assume, on the basis of the evidence at hand, that Nasser's objective was a political rather than a military showdown.³

He was convinced that a firm stand against what he believed to be a planned Israeli attack on Syria might exert enough pressure on the United Nations for them to consider a settlement favourable to the Arab states. This meant a return, not to the 1956, but to the 1948 situation. Furthermore, the aim of this political manoeuvre was not merely to avert an impending Israeli invasion but also to provide an opportunity for the United Nations to reconsider the entire question of Palestine.⁴

¹Badeau, P. 102.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Alem, P. 112.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the 1967 War between the Arab states and Israel was the product of a peculiar blend of internal and external forces. The post-Suez era, by any standards, was not a peaceful period, although a precarious equilibrium existed in the area; the disputants had managed to refrain from major hostilities. However, the eruption of explosive fighting in 1967 implies the intrusion of a new factor in the Middle East balance of forces, which upset the status quo.¹

Within the context of the interplay of these dynamic forces, the 1967 War takes on a new perspective: the Middle East was not only the scene of war between the Arab states and Israel, it was also the battlefield of two other wars - the intra-Arab war and the cold war. All three were being waged simultaneously in June 1967.

To the complexities of this three-dimensional war, another element was added. The conscious or unconscious beliefs and convictions of Arabs and Israelis, forged by the events of the past three generations, had begun to manifest themselves in a series of misinterpretations of the intentions of the parties involved.

Chronologically, the factors contributing to the 1967 War were:

- 1) a cycle of raids and reprisals between Israel and Syria;
- 2) Egypt's closure of the Strait of Tiran to Israeli shipping;
- 3) defense pacts between Egypt-Syria and Egypt-Jordan;
- 4) changes in the

¹Draper, P. 3.

policies of the "big two" vis-à-vis the Arab states and Israel.

None of these by itself could have changed the situation significantly but, together, they exerted enough pressure to tilt the uneasy equilibrium. However, "the real casus belli was a struggle against history."¹ But,

History cannot be judged by the application of any rigid code of ethics, it can only be represented in the manner of Greek tragedy, where the antagonists are both in the right in their own terms of reference and in their own universe of discours.²

In the tragedy of Arabs and Jews, the Palestinian drama is a war of nationalism, which has lasted for three generations and cannot be solved by the magical formula of a peace treaty, direct negotiations or a compromise to meet the demands of each party. Unfortunately, many contentions between the Arab states and Israel have been over superficial matters; albeit significant in themselves, they are secondary to the real cause of the war. Although a remedy for these conflicts undoubtedly help to ease the chronic tensions in the area, it will not wipe out the cause of the present dispute.

The reason is that, the Arabs' arguments have a solid historical and juridical basis: Palestine had been Arab for 13 centuries and the formation of the theocratic Zionist state in Palestine was contrary to the rights of the people involved.³

Furthermore, it was anti-Semitic Europe which paved the way for the birth of political Zionism; it was the Nazi massacre that was the

¹Draper, P. 15.

²Koestler, P. 23.

³Alem, P. 188.

foster father of the State of Israel. In the words of Jean-Pierre Alem, a detrimental factor of the drama "is not so much the presence of the Jews, with whom the Arabs have the opportunity of co-habitation, but the representative of a truly explosive civilization; a civilization which had never been known to respect other people and could not expand without sowing the seeds of disorder and demoralization."¹

Mostly, the Israelis are Europeans themselves. Examples can be cited that bear witness to the fact that original Western groups can never live together with indigenous people in reciprocal and harmonious respect: South Africa and Algeria; in the United States of America where the problem is more acute, that of the massacre and the confinement of the survivors in the Indian Reserves.²

However, as for Palestine, the inexorable logic of facts dictates that no room for a second nation can be found in Palestine, except by the displacement and/or extermination of the nation already in possession.³

In the last analysis, the only legitimate reason for Israel's existence is based on the "right of conquest." However, this premise also admits the possibility of reconquest by the same brutal force, the right to uproot the problem. This method would endanger not only peace in the Middle East but, also, would have a disastrous effect on world

¹Alem, P. 189.

²Ibid.

³Draper, P. 21.

peace as well.¹

Finally, it is in the failure to cooperate, egoism and hypocrisy of Western politics that one finds the germs of the present conflict. The Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917, consecrated the success of the Zionist Organization. Not only were the Arabs not consulted regarding the fate of their own country but they were deceived in the promise of independence made to them during the war, despite the fact that "the Sherif rendered Britain a service greater than any that could be expected in the material realm."²

It is pertinent, then, to conclude that Palesine became twice promised and therefore "promised to conflict."³

¹Alem, P. 189.

²Jeffries, P. 60.

³Alem, P. 7.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S DECLARATION TO THE SEVEN ARABS¹

(June 16, 1918)

[This Declaration was made in reply to a memorial submitted to the Foreign Office through the Arab Bureau in Cairo, by seven Arab leaders domiciled in Egypt.

The Declaration was read out by an officer of the Arab Bureau at a meeting of the seven Arab leaders, which had been specially convened for the purpose on June 16, 1918, in Cairo.

The text reproduced here is my own rendering of the Arabic text which is in the possession of one of the seven memorialists.

In Arab circles this Declaration is usually known as the Declaration to the Seven.]

[Translation]

DECLARATION TO THE SEVEN

His Majesty's Government have considered the memorial of the Seven with great care. They fully appreciate the reasons for the desire of its authors to retain their anonymity,² but the fact that the memorial is anonymous has in no way detracted from the value which His Majesty's Government assign to that document.

The territories mentioned in the memorial fall into four categories:-

- (i) Territories which were free and independent before the outbreak of the War;
- (ii) Territories liberated from Turkish rule by the action of the Arab themselves;

¹George Antonius, The Arab Awakening.

²The memorialists were Rafiq al-'Azm; Shaikh Kamel al-Qassab; Mukhtar al-Sulh; 'Abdul-Rahman Shahbandar; Khaled al-Hakim; Fauzi al-Bakri; Hasan Himadeh.

- (iii) Territories liberated from Turkish rule by the action of the Allied armies;
- (iv) Territories still under Turkish rule.

With regard to the first two categories,¹ His Majesty's Government recognise the complete and sovereign independence of the Arabs inhabiting those territories, and support them in their struggle for freedom.

With regard to the territories occupied by the Allied armies,² His Majesty's Government invite the attention of the memorialists to the proclamations issued by the commander-in-chief on the occasions of the capture of Baghdad (March 19, 1917) and of the capture of Jerusalem (December 9, 1917). These proclamations define the policy of His Majesty's Government towards the inhabitants of those regions, which is that the future government of those territories should be based upon the principle of the consent of the governed. This policy will always be that of His Majesty's Government.

With regard to the territories in the fourth category,³ it is the desire of His Majesty's Government that the oppressed peoples in those territories should obtain their freedom and independence. His Majesty's Government will continue to work for the achievement of that object. They are fully aware of the difficulties and perils which threaten those who are striving for the liberation!⁴ of the inhabitants of those territories.

In spite of those obstacles, however, His Majesty's Government believe that the difficulties can be overcome, and they are prepared to give every support to those who are striving to overcome them. They are ready to consider any scheme of co-operation which does not conflict with the military operations in hand or with the political principles proclaimed by His Majesty's Government and their allies.

¹ i.e., the independent states of the Arabian Peninsula, and the Hejaz as far north as 'Aqaba'.

² In June 1918, when this statement was issued, those territories comprised the greater part of Iraq (inclusive of Basra and Baghdad) and the southern half of Palestine (inclusive of Jerusalem and Jaffa).

³ i.e., the hitherto unliberated portions of Iraq and Syria.

⁴ This word is obscure in the Arabic source.

APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Mrs. Leila Enayat-Seraf (née Rishtya) has been read and approved by the following committee:

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Nov. 28, 1977

Date



Director's Signature